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**HISTORY**  
**OF**  
**FRENCH LITERATURE**



HISTORY  
OF  
FRENCH LITERATURE

BY  
HENRI VAN LAUN

II.  
FROM THE CLASSICAL RENAISSANCE UNTIL THE  
END OF THE REIGN OF LOUIS XIV.



LONDON  
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BOOK IV.

THE CLASSICAL RENAISSANCE.

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CHAPTER I.

§ 1. THE LEAGUE AND THE JESUITS.

THE mighty flood of new ideas, inventions, restorations, emancipations of thought and belief, which flowed in upon the human mind as soon as the Renaissance had broken down the accumulated obstructions of the Middle Ages, was not permitted to advance without many a check and hindrance. The jealousy of scholasticism, which saw the very foundations of its pseudo-ancient learning undermined ; the hatred of the Church, whose power and influence were threatened by the revindication of reason and private judgment ; the tyranny of constituted authorities, who were not slow to catch the contagion of fear, and listened eagerly to the timid counsels of their advisers—these, as we have seen, set their faces against every manifestation and development of the spirit of innovation, and succeeded only too often in their crusade of suppression. Of all the engines employed in this war against light and liberty the most effective was found in the Society of Jesus, which, by a decree of Parliament,<sup>1</sup> was authorised to open its schools and lecture-rooms independently of the Universities. The Jesuits, faithful to the genius of their founder, who despatched his missionaries into France in the

<sup>1</sup> March 29th, 1565.



year 1559, adopted a plan calculated above all others to ensure success. Discouraging the study of the Bible as unnecessary or even dangerous to the young and ill-educated, they disarmed the suspicions of their pupils by setting before them classical mythology and literature; themselves presiding over the study, after first preparing the very textbooks and lexicons. It was not long before all the principal towns in the country had their flourishing classical schools, in which the followers of Loyola professed to initiate the young into all that was valuable in the new and the ancient learning. Pasquier, one of the ablest of their opponents, does not underrate the force of "their erudition interwoven with religion,"<sup>1</sup> nor was it possible that they who knew how to avail themselves of such a force in such an age should fail to reap a considerable triumph. The most assiduous and redoubtable of Loyola's disciples in France was Edmond Auger,<sup>2</sup> the confessor of Henry III., educated at the College in Rome, who earned for himself the cognomen of "the French Chrysostom." His catechism was widely used throughout the country, and his sermons, of which we possess but meagre illustrations, served to keep the zeal of his vast audiences at fever heat, and brought many Huguenots to the stake, although they spared his life when he was taken at Valence by the cruel chief of partisans, the Baron des Adrets.

Another powerful instrument of obscurantism employed with terrible effect against the reformers, and still intimately concerned with the literature of the Renaissance, was the Catholic League, an association of which the first branch was formed at Toulouse, and sanctioned by the local parliament, just before the conclusion of peace at Amboise, in 1563.<sup>3</sup> Blaise de Montluc was chosen for its chief. There were

<sup>1</sup> L'érudition et la religion tout ensemble.

<sup>2</sup> 1530-1591.

<sup>3</sup> It is at this point that the *Histoire Ecclésiastique* of Theodore de Beza terminates.

allied with him the Cardinals Strozzi and d'Armagnac, with other ecclesiastics and soldiers, and all who refused to join their ranks were declared "rebels and disobedient to the king." The peace was of short duration, and with the renewal of hostilities the League became a strong and formidable society. Similar confraternities sprang up in that and the succeeding years in various parts of France, and as their object was the same, they soon fell, nominally or virtually, under a single head, looking to the estates of Guienne and Languedoc for their direction, and to Montluc as their leader. The land was on fire, and it was in vain for wise and patriotic statesmen like the Chancellor de l'Hôpital to attempt its pacification. His celebrated Ordinance of Moulins, in which he seeks to enforce upon the local administrations the due discharge of their impartial functions, and lays down, in eighty-six elaborate and well-considered articles, the principles of justice and municipal privilege, was warmly discussed in Parliament; and, though it was confirmed after many weeks of party recriminations and protests, it remained for years little more than a dead letter. In point of fact, it is one of the grandest monuments of French jurisprudence; and if it failed to effect at the time what its author had ventured to hope from it, this was only because men's minds were blinded by passion, and deaf to everything except the religious animosities into which the persecuting zeal of the Church had plunged them. L'Hôpital recognised at last that he was not equal to his mission of pacification. He quitted his post in despair; and a contemporary puts the finishing stroke to the portrait of this noble and lofty-minded patriot when he describes how the old man, stroking his long white beard, exclaimed: "After this snow has melted, there will remain nothing but mud."<sup>1</sup>

Numerous and active as the "holy leagues" or "leagues

<sup>1</sup> Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. ix. p. 201.

of the Holy Spirit" had become in Languedoc, Guienne, Burgundy, Champagne, and other French provinces, it was not until the year 1576 that the great League of Picardy was founded, by d'Humières, governor of Péronne, and a large number of "prelates, *sieurs*, gentlemen, captains, soldiers, and residents in the towns and plains" of that province, one object whereof was to unite for combined action all the scattered Catholic Leagues in the country. The articles of association of the League of Picardy enumerate the reasons and purposes of its formation, some of which are significant enough as read by the light of history, and bear witness to the vigour and resolution of these powerful barons and prelates, before whom the king himself learned to tremble. Let us quote but half-a-dozen of the twelve articles as they have been handed down to us in the contemporary chronicle of De La Popelinière :—<sup>1</sup>

"The association is called into existence, and shall be constituted . . .

"2. To preserve the king, Henry III., by the grace of God, and the most Christian kings, his successors, in the state, glory, authority, service, and obedience which are due to them from their subjects, as it is contained in the articles which shall be presented to the States, which he swears and promises to keep at his consecration and coronation, declaring that he will do nothing to the prejudice of what shall be ordained by the said States.

"3. To restore to the provinces of this kingdom and the States thereof the ancient rights and dignities, franchises and liberties, such as they were from the time of King Clovis, the first Christian king, and such as are still better and more profitable, if any are to be found under the above-named protection.

"4. In case there shall be hindrance, opposition, or revolt against that which is hereinbefore included, by whom and from what part soever they shall arise, the said associates shall be

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire des Troubles et Guerres civiles en France pour le fait de la religion, depuis 1555 jusqu'en 1581. La Rochelle, 1581, 2 vols.*

bound to employ their whole property and means, and even their own persons, to the death, to punish, chastise, and fall foul of those who shall have attempted to restrain and hinder them. . . .

"8. All the Catholics of the towns and villages shall be secretly warned and summoned by the several governors to enter the said association, and duly to furnish arms and men for the carrying out of the same, according to the power and ability of each.

"9. They who will not enter the said association shall be reputed as enemies of the same, and liable to every kind of attack and molestation."

And the formula of oath was as follows :—

"12. I swear by God the Creator, touching this Gospel, and under pain of anathema and everlasting damnation, that I have entered this holy Catholic association according to the form of the compact which has here been read to me, loyally and sincerely, whether to command therein or to obey ; and I promise, on my life and my honour, to continue therein to my last drop of blood, without opposition thereto or withdrawal therefrom, by reason of any command, pretext, excuse, or occasion whatever."

The leagues of the Huguenots were less stringent and exacting in their character than the articles here quoted, which, when sternly carried out, as in many instances they were, must be considered worthy of any secret society in any age. It is observable that the primary object of the associations, on one side and on the other, is stated to be the preservation and vindication of ancient rights and liberties ; but, in the light of the document here referred to, it is impossible to maintain that this characteristic phenomenon of the sixteenth century was the mere outcome of a popular enthusiasm for liberty, or for the defence of municipal privileges, however much these latter may have been threatened, or however highly they may have been valued. The leagues of the Roman Catholics, though professedly based on attachment to liberty, and asserting a defensive rather than an offensive policy, were



clearly instigated by hatred of the Protestants, and by a determination to destroy them. The Protestant leagues, on the other hand, were more essentially defensive, and the leaders of the Huguenots, particularly after the massacre of St. Bartholomew, were citizens below the rank of the nobility.

The Roman Catholic League played a leading part in the religious wars of this period, but the complete organisation proposed by the nobles of Picardy was never actually attained. Amiens was the first important city to refuse obedience to d'Humières and his colleagues, and the king, at first overawed, drew courage from this refusal to withstand the embarrassing advances of his professed friends. The jealousy between the debauched and childless king, Henry III., and his arrogant Roman Catholic nobles widened year by year; and matters were still further complicated by the fact that the king's nearest of kin, Henry of Navarre, presumptive heir to the throne, was a professed Huguenot. In 1585 we find the League on the point of taking up arms against the monarch; and its manifesto, issued on this occasion, whilst alleging such general grievances as one might expect from the leaders of a democratic revolt, is evidently inspired by repugnance against the Protestant succession. It was, in fact, Henry of Navarre rather than the king who stood face to face with the army of the League, the weak monarch himself vacillating between the two parties, but finally casting in his lot with the Roman Catholics. He revoked the edicts of toleration which he had formerly granted, and thus precipitated the civil war which presently devastated France anew, and all but resulted in her dismemberment.

The issue of this long religious struggle was not attained until Henry of Navarre, triumphant on the battlefield, but unable to conquer the stern resolution of his religious enemies, renounced Protestantism, and consented to become a tool where he could not be supreme. Then the war was at an end, and the Roman Catholic States-general as a political

party sank, through mere lassitude and indifference, beneath the superior ambition and astuteness of Papal intriguers. They remodelled their oath, substituting the Pope for a leader taken from their own body, and the League was virtually at an end.<sup>1</sup>

## § 2. INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS DISSENSIONS ON LITERATURE.

The war of the pen accompanied the war of the sword; the intellect kept pace with all the marches and counter-marches of human ambition and rivalry. The literature of the time is the reflex of its external history, and the annals of each are filled with episodes of the other. No phase of French history exhibits this natural and necessary interdependence more clearly than the one whose outlines we have been thus lightly tracing, for in many instances the actors on either stage are identical. Rather let us say that on the one stage of human history are to be found impersonators who fill a double rôle, who are present in almost every scene, and whose absence would cause a double blank in the enacted drama. Let it not be supposed that the sheathing of the sword brought an end to the contest which had raged so terribly during more than one generation; the pen carried on the controversy with at least equal bitterness. After the change of religion of Henry IV. there were at least three parties in the convulsed and distracted country, whose mutual rage refused to be pacified;—the Huguenots, almost annihilated as they were by the massacre of St. Bartholomew; the king, protected and championed by the Church; and the half-effete League, which could not with a good grace accept a relapsed Protestant as its monarch, and which had, in fact, become gradually more democratic in its tendencies through long reliance upon the popular elements for its recruits.

<sup>1</sup> 1593.

Let us turn from political to social and literary aspects ; for not otherwise shall we succeed in gaining a satisfactory idea of this portentous phenomenon of the sixteenth century. Fostered by the intrigues of all the Roman Catholic countries of Europe, carefully nursed for their own purposes by the Duke of Guise and his fellow-nobles, the League undoubtedly had its origin in the religious enthusiasm of the masses of France, who were overwhelmingly Roman Catholic. A strong reaction had set in against the teaching of Calvin and his disciples, and the public opinion of the country was fairly roused against the Huguenots. Diametrically opposed to the public opinion of Germany and England, which thoroughly endorsed the principles of the reformed faith, this instinctive fidelity of Frenchmen to the old religion, encouraged as it was by the preaching of the Jesuits and the authority of the Sorbonne, caught fire from the eloquence of the pulpit, and inflamed the country from one end to the other. The seed sown by Auger and his fellow-emissaries from the Society of Jesus rapidly bore fruit ; and the victories reaped by the several leagues in their earlier days were even eclipsed by the victories of the tongue and pen. Jean Boucher, Rose, bishop of Senlis, Canon Launay, who had been a Protestant himself, Prévôt, Pelletier, Guincestre, Hamilton, Cueilly, were amongst the first and the most famous of a numerous company of orators who have become known under the name of *Prédicateurs de la Ligue*. Their rhetoric stung the people into fury, and kept at fever-heat the zealous orthodoxy and persecuting rage of the Catholic mob, not only in the capital but throughout the provinces. They did not spare the highest and most powerful men in the kingdom, as often as they deemed them hostile or even lukewarm in matters of faith and practice. Whether they cried for vengeance on the assassins of the Guises, or, like Boucher, declared that the time was come to take the sickle in hand and mow down the Parliament, or spoke of the "blood-letting" of St. Bartholo-

mew, or, like Guincestre, apostrophised the president de Harlay from the pulpit, and forced him to raise his hand in token of a vow to be avenged on their enemies, they set no bounds of fear or prudence to the burning eloquence which consumed them. In the ardour of their political partisanship they forgot the Gospel of Christ, and accustomed their hearers to the absorbing sensationalism of the civil war. Twice a day, in most of the churches of Paris, harangues of this description were preached to overflowing congregations; and as for their style, one of them was compared by a contemporary, l'Estoile, to "an enraged fishwife." But, in style, one must not omit to take success into consideration; and the preachers of the League were successful with a vengeance. No wonder if Henry IV. allowed himself to exclaim, "All my troubles come from the pulpit!" The officious eloquence of the monk Christin, charged by the Sixteen<sup>1</sup> of Paris to communicate to the people the news of their reverse at Ivry, often as it has been related, deserves to be told once again. He went into the pulpit, and selected for his text the words, "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth." He began by describing the loved ones of God, insinuating that they who heard him were at all events amongst the number. That being so, they must look for chastisement at the hands of their God. And here, by a preconcerted signal, a messenger entered the church and delivered a missive to the preacher. Christin opened and read it; and raising his hands to heaven he declared that God had made him a prophet. And so he related the news of the disaster. On this foundation he worked upon the feelings of his audience, until he had moved

<sup>1</sup> The Sixteen, *les Seize*, was the name given to a counsel of citizens, chosen in the sixteen quarters of Paris, who played a very considerable part during the troubles of the League. In 1587 they published a violent manifesto, and exercised great influence until 1591, when the Duke of Mayenne had several of them hanged, in retaliation for the hanging of a president of the parliament and two counsellors.



them from sorrow to renewed enthusiasm, and converted every coward into a possible hero.<sup>1</sup>

It will be manifest from the cursory review which we have taken of the political and social conditions of the religious upheaval of France in the sixteenth century that the pulpit was considered, and in fact was an engine rather for the incitement of passion than for its moderation, an auxiliary to human ambition and questionable designs rather than the simple handmaid of the Gospel and of morality. Mademoiselle de Montpensier boasted, towards the end of the century, that she had effected more through the mouth of her preachers than all the rest together with their intrigues, arms, and armies. For the evil as well as for the good influences of their sensational pulpit oratory the Jesuits must be held accountable; for Boucher's murderous instigations as much as for the comparatively purer evangelism of others. There were, indeed, French preachers in the sixteenth century, before the Society of Jesus had been founded, who knew both how to rouse the populace to enthusiasm and how to brave the pride and tyranny of authority. Olivier Maillard, a Franciscan monk, and Michel Menot, a friar of the same order, had set the example of that popular and outspoken rhetoric which most surely wins its way to the heart of the masses, and had not stinted their indignant protests against the cruel lusts of Louis XI. Their declamation, though chiefly in a kind of macaronic Latin, was little less violent than that of their successors half a century later, upon whom it is not improbable that we may trace the direct influence of their example.<sup>2</sup> But Maillard and Menot were preachers of the Gospel; as genuinely and as earnestly so as the earliest Reformers; whilst the preachers of the League were at all

<sup>1</sup> Demogeot, *Histoire de la littérature française*. "Les Prédicateurs de la Ligue," p. 300, *et passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Maillard died in 1502, though some say ten years later. Menot lived until 1518.

events political agitators and demagogues, more or less conscientiously religious in their style, but still setting before themselves political ends as their most anxious consideration, and allowing the taste of the populace to determine the form of their oratory, in order that their eloquence might lime and snare the mob.

If the outrage of style and the vehemence of declamation had been the worst faults of the preachers of the League, we should have had little to allege against them. The times were such that pulpit oratory must have attained a development of this kind, or have become utterly ineffectual and neglected. Demoralised by constant civil war, and by the bold challenging of supreme authority in Church and State, the mob could not have been reached by anything less emotional and vehement than the preaching which rivalled in popular favour the melodramatic representations of the stage. But religion stooped still lower in its assault upon the minds of the masses, and the League has to answer for a deliberate indication and justification of murder. It is true that in the adoption of this sophistry they do not stand alone, either in that or in proximate generations. Puritans must share the reproach with Roman Catholics, Englishmen with Frenchmen. The pamphleteers of the sixteenth century argued the point over and over again. François Hotman, on the morrow of St. Bartholomew, maintained the doctrine in his *Gaule Franke*.<sup>1</sup> Sureau declared that Charles IX. would merit death if he refused to sanction Calvinism. The Protestant Hubert Languet wrote his *Vindiciæ contra tyrannos* to show that monarchs were the mere creatures of the people's will, and that the determination of their reigns would follow justly upon the people's displeasure. In England Milton, and the author of the pamphlet *Killing no Murder*, argued

<sup>1</sup> See Réaume, *Prosateurs du XVI<sup>e</sup>. siècle*, in whose footsteps we are here treading.

much in the same fashion ; as also did the French savant, Bodin.<sup>1</sup> The perilous teaching bore its natural fruit ; and in two instances, it must be confessed, this fruit was almost of a nature to confirm the respective partisans of the murderers in their belief. We refer to the assassination of the Guises, and the death of Henry III. at the hand of Jacques Clément. The manner in which the latter act was regarded by the Leaguers, who had been enraged at the favour shown by the dissolute king to Henry of Navarre, may be recognised in more than one document of contemporary literature. Here is the conclusion of the most significant pamphlet<sup>2</sup> on the subject :—

“ Ah, holy and happy martyr (Jacques Clément), inasmuch as you did it not to receive therefrom any recompense here below, which must in truth have been too small, we pledge ourselves and our successors for ever to pray Him, in whose hand are all possible recompenses, to give you the merited reward of such and so excellent a martyrdom.”

Of all the preachers of the League, Boucher was the most eloquent and the most pugnacious. A pedant with a turn for fighting, he alternately wrote learned diatribes in Latin, and egged on the populace to revolt against the constituted State authorities. In French he composed *The Life and Noteworthy Deeds of Henry of Valois, set forth at length, without curtailing anything ; wherein are contained the treasons, perfidies, sacrileges, exactions, cruelties, and disgraces of that hypocrite and apostate*. The Latin work which has come down to us is a treatise *On the Righteous Removal of Henry III*. Herein he glorifies the assassin Clément after the following fashion :—

<sup>1</sup> See vol. i., bk. iii. ch. 3, page 325.

<sup>2</sup> *Le martyre de frère Jacques Clément, de l'ordre de Saint-Dominique, contenant au vray toutes les particularités plus remarquables de sa sainte résolution et très-heureuse entreprise à l'encontre de Henri de Valois*, Paris, chez R. Le Fizelier, rue Saint-Jacques, à la Bible d'or, 1589.

"Lo! in the midst of our writhing, whilst the pulpit, whilst public conferences, the organisation of the army occupy our time and disturb our leisure, lo! a piece of news at once wonderful and terrible is spread abroad. A young man, another Ekad, more courageous than Ekad, and genuinely inspired by Christ, by a paramount grace has repeated the act of Jotham on Holofernes, the act of David on Goliath. Jacques Clément, of a truth, has but put in practice a general doctrine: but this courage, this resolution so gloriously fulfilled, which he had opened beforehand to one or two, all this deserves gratitude, and has spread joy, and holy joy, in the hearts of good men. Glory be to God! Peace is restored to the Church, to the country, by the death of this wild beast. Clément has made him expiate his false clemency."

The bitterness of Boucher was not satiated by the death of the king. He labours to curse even his memory, and leaves the monarch's name—Henri de Valois—pilloried in half-a-dozen anagrams, such as *Vilain Hérodes! Dehors le Vilain! O crudelis hyena! O le Judas Henri*, and the like. And even after Henry IV. had become a Roman Catholic Boucher preached, on nine successive days, his nine sermons *On the pretended Conversion of Henry de Bourbon*, in which he did his best to persuade the country that the king was a hypocrite. "Let us get at the bottom," he said, "of this show of absolution; let us see whether it has any vitality, or whether it is a mere phantom, a mere stage figure . . . a mere child's puppet, or a mere masquerade garment in which to play at absolution on the stage of St. Denis as they used to play formerly the Passion." Boucher's style was essentially loose and colloquial. He says of Henry III., "We have seen him in the same hour Huguenot and Roman Catholic! And then behold him at the mass! And sound the drums! Long live the King!" A joke or an objurgation was ever on his lips. "He (the king) is a heretic, a backslider, sacrilegious, a burner of churches, a slaughterer of monks and priests, one who has done nothing else in his life



than make war on the Church, and shed the blood of Catholics." Labitte, who thought that he detected in the League many of the notes and symbols of democracy, describes Boucher's Latin treatise as "the image of the times, a medley of coarse buffooneries, ridiculous quibbles, scholastic subtleties, vehement dogmatism, declamations of the market-place, legal quirks, crude biblical learning, profane pedantry, impassioned animosities, the rubbish of Papal theocracy, and an indefinable anticipation of revolutionary doctrines."<sup>1</sup> We could say nothing harsher, and we may leave the controversialist of the sixteenth century to the mercy of the critic of the nineteenth.

### § 3. ADVOCATES OF THE LEAGUE.

Amongst the famous Sixteen who opposed the accession of Henry of Navarre in Paris was Louis d'Orléans, a learned advocate, who produced an ephemeral pamphlet under the title : *A Warning to French Catholics from an English Catholic*. It was he who praised the "very wholesome blood-letting of St. Bartholomew," bidding his readers beware lest they should be called on to experience, as in England, the cruelties of a heretic king. "We are accused," he says, "of being Spaniards. Yea, rather than have a Huguenot prince, we would go and seek, I say not merely a Spanish, but a Tartar, a Muscovite, a Scythian Catholic." The same Louis d'Orléans is to be credited with another pamphlet, perhaps the most bitter of all that have come down to us. It was written whilst its author was advocate-general, a fact which doubtless speaks more eloquently of the licence of the age, and the temporary feebleness of authority, than of any recognised freedom of the press. The brochure in question is entitled

<sup>1</sup> *De la Démocratie chez les Prédicateurs de la Ligue*, p. 97.

*The Banquet of the Count of Arête*; and we may judge of its vigour and tone by a single specimen. The Protestant ministers, says d'Orléans, "ought to be strung up like fagots from base to summit of the tree in the fire of Saint John;"<sup>1</sup> whilst the king himself "should be put into the hogshead where they put the cats."<sup>2</sup> . . . a sacrifice pleasing to heaven, and delightful to the whole earth."

*A Dialogue between a Royalist and a Ligueur*<sup>3</sup> was another successful pamphlet produced under the auspices of the Sixteen; the authorship being ascribed to Morin de Cromé. The work is useful to the historian as containing evidence not elsewhere found concerning the origin and the conduct of the Sixteen, and of the League generally. There can be little doubt that the hatred displayed by the pamphleteers of the day against Henry of Navarre had its encouragement, if not its source, in the lavishly expended doubloons of Spanish emissaries.

One of the fiercest soldiers who fought against the Protestants with his pen as bitterly as he fought against them with his sword, was Blaise de Montluc, who, from a simple private, rose to become Marshal of France. He died, indeed, almost before the League had become generally organised;<sup>4</sup> but his *Commentaries* form an important part of the literature of the religious wars; and they were recognised by Henry IV., after he had become a Roman Catholic, as "the soldier's Bible." Montluc wrote much about the events of his time, more about himself; and he wrote nothing more characteristic than the sentence: "People might know where I had passed, for on the trees by the roads they found the

<sup>1</sup> It was the custom to celebrate the summer solstice by the lighting of large fires; hence on Saint John's Eve a large bonfire was kindled. It is said to be the remains of a Druidical superstition.

<sup>2</sup> In allusion to the practice of throwing a large cask filled with live cats into the midst of the fire.

<sup>3</sup> *Dialogue du Maheustre et du Manant.*

<sup>4</sup> In 1577.

tokens ;"<sup>1</sup> these tokens being the bodies of his enemies who hung upon the trees by the way, for "a man hanged astonishes more than a hundred killed." He never spared a foe ; never weakened himself by dropping the point of his sword from an enemy's throat, or permitting his pen to be generous to one whom he hated. Hear the manner in which his *Commentaries* are recorded :—

"Think it not strange that I have been as fortunate as I say, for I have never set before me aught but my duty ; and I have acknowledged that all comes from God, to whom I confided everything, although the Huguenots have deemed me an atheist ; they are my enemies and are not to be believed. Whilst I have had imperfections and vices, and am no more holy than others (they have their share, albeit they mortify themselves), still I have ever placed my confidence in God, acknowledging that my fortune or misfortune must come from Him, attributing to Him all the successes which He has given me in battle. I have never found myself in any contest that I have not called Him to my aid, and I have not spent a day of my life without praying to Him and seeking His pardon. And often, I can say with truth, I have seen my enemies with such fear that I felt my heart or limbs trembling (let us make no boast—the fear of death comes before the eyes) ; but as I had made my prayer to God, I felt my strength revive."<sup>2</sup>

Montluc was one of those men who may be considered as the test-characters of literature ; who by circumstances and natural bent are men of action, and who make a stir in the world and a certain name in letters through the same constraining necessity—the necessity of doing energetically what they find themselves in a position to do. He served in Italy, Lorraine, and Guienne ; had been present at five pitched battles, seventeen assaults, eleven sieges, two hundred skirmishes. He received twenty-four wounds, of which the last one, which took away half of his face, was when sixty-

<sup>1</sup> "On pouvait connaître par là où j'étais passé car par les arbres sur les chemins on trouvait les enseignes."

<sup>2</sup> *Commentaries*, bk. vii.

seven years old. He persuaded Francis the First, then old and feeble, to allow the Duke d'Enghien to attack the German and English troops, and this in spite of the king's council, and by the influence of his warlike Gascon eloquence alone. The victory of C  risolles<sup>1</sup> was the consequence of this permission.

Let us give here the bold and heart-stirring speech which he delivered before Francis the First, and which sounds even now like the blast of a trumpet :—

“Sire—I consider myself very happy . . . because I have to speak before a soldier-king, and not before a king who has never been in war. . . . We are five or six thousand Gascons. Count them, for you know that the companies are not wholly complete; therefore all can never come to the battle; but I think that we shall be five thousand five hundred or six hundred Gascons; count them, and I pledge my honour for this; all, captains and soldiers, will give their names and their native place, and will forfeit their heads if they shall not fight on the day of battle, if you please to grant it and give us leave to fight. It is a thing for which we have waited, and which we have desired a long time. Believe, Sire, that there are no soldiers in the world better than those. . . . Who do you think can kill nine or ten thousand men . . . all resolved to conquer or to die? Such people are not thus undone, they are no beginners. I dare say that if we had all one arm fastened to the body, it would not yet be in the power of the hostile army to kill us for a whole day without losing the greatest part of their people and of their best men. Think, therefore, when we shall have our two arms free and swords in our hands, if it will be easy and facile to beat us. Certainly, Sire, I have learned from wise captains that an army composed of twelve to fifteen thousand men can make head against one of thirty thousand, for it is not the great number which conquers, it is the stout heart. . . . All that stirs these gentlemen, who have given their advice before your Majesty, is the fear of a loss; they say nothing else but, *If we should lose, if we should lose*; I never heard any one of them say, *If we should gain, if we should gain, what great advantage would accrue*

<sup>1</sup> 14th of April 1544.



to us! For God's sake, Sire, do not fear to grant us our request, and let me not return with that shame that they should say that you were afraid to trust the chance of a battle in our hands, who offer you willingly and cordially our lives."<sup>1</sup>

Eleven years afterwards Montluc was sent to Sienna to defend the place against the Imperialists under the Marquess of Marignano. Though very seriously wounded he reached the town amidst great difficulties, and defended it during ten months. In 1562 he was sent by Catherine de Medici into Guienne, and there he showed what he could do. He travelled always accompanied by two hangmen, whom he called his lackeys, and who were ever occupied.

<sup>1</sup> We give the original, as a specimen of Montluc's style :—"Sire, je me tiens bienheureux . . . parceque j'ay à parler devant un Roy soldat et non devant un Roy qui n'a jamais esté en guerre. . . . Nous sommes de cinq à six mille Gascons. Comptez, car vous savez que jamais les compagnies ne sont du tout complètes ; aussi tout ne se peut jamais trouver à la bataille ; mais j'estime que nous serons cinq mil cinq cens ou six cens Gascons ; comptez, et de cela je vous en respons sur mon honneur ; tous, capitaines et soldats vous baillerons nos noms et les lieux d'où nous sommes, et vous obligerons nos testes que tous combattrons le jour de la bataille, s'il vous plaist de l'accorder et nous donner congé de combattre. C'est chose que nous attendons et désirons il y a longtemps. Croyez, Sire, qu'au monde il n'y a point de soldats plus résolus que ceux-là. . . . Qui voulez vous qui tue neuf ou dix mil hommes et mil ou douze cens chevaux tous résolus de mourir ou de vaincre ? Telles gens que cela ne se deffont pas ainsi, ce ne sont pas des apprentis. J'oserais dire que si nous avions tous un bras lié, il ne serait encores en la puissance de l'armée ennemie de nous tuer de tout un jour sans perte de la plus grand part de leurs gens et des meilleurs hommes. Pensez donc, quand nous aurons les deux bras libres et le fer en la main, s'il sera aisé et facile de nous battre. Certes, Sire, j'ai appris des sages capitaines qu'une armée composée de douze à quinze mil hommes en peut affronter une de trente mille, car n'est pas le grand nombre qui vaine, c'est le bon coeur. . . . Tout ce qui esmeut messieurs qui ont opiné devant Vostre Majesté est la crainte d'une perte ; ils ne disent autre chose si ce n'est : *si nous perdons, si nous perdons* ; je n'ai ouy personne d'eux qui aye jamais dit : *si nous gagnons, si nous gagnons, quel grand bien nous adviendra ?* Pour Dieu ! Sire, ne craignez de nous accorder nostre requeste, et que je ne m'en retourne pas avec ceste honte qu'on die que vous avez peur de mettre le hasard d'une bataille entre nos mains, qui vous offrons volontiers et de bon coeur, nostre vie."—*Commentaires*, bk. ii. 1544.

Let us hear him relate himself how he went to work with them.

"I had the two hangmen behind me, well equipped with their arms, and above all with a very sharp knife; in a rage I jumped up and seized Verdier by the collar, and said to him: 'O wicked rascal, have you dared indeed to sully with your wicked tongue the majesty of your king?' He answered me: 'Ah! sir, be merciful to a sinner.' Then I felt more enraged than before, and said to him, 'Wicked man, do you wish me to have mercy upon you, and you have not respected your king?' I pushed him roughly on the ground, and his neck fell precisely on a piece of the cross which had been upset, and I said to the hangman, 'Strike, villain.' My words were immediately followed by his blow, which carried away moreover half-a-foot of the cross. I had the other two fellows hung on an elm tree which was quite near, and because the deacon was only eighteen years old, I did not wish to have him killed, and also that he might bring the tidings to his brethren; but I ordered the hangmen to give him so many blows with a whip that I have been told he died of them ten or twelve days after. This is the first execution which I ordered when leaving my house, without any sentence or witness, for I have heard it said that, in such things, we must begin with an execution."<sup>1</sup>

Such an act of cold-blooded ferocity could hardly be believed, but Montluc had his excuse at hand. He thought he only did his duty to his king, his faith, and his religion, and for such holy causes everything is allowed; he pretends that it was not in his nature to be cruel;<sup>2</sup> but he does not convince us; for<sup>3</sup> he says himself in his *Commentaries* that "his nature induced him more to employ his hands than to pacify matters, loving better to strike and to play with knives than to make speeches." Every town taken by his troops was sacked, for soldiers must have their "quarry;" every place pacified meant, in Montluc's language, that he had killed or hung more than half of the Huguenots, and only

<sup>1</sup> *Commentaires*, bk. v. 1562.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* bk. iv.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* bk. v. 1563.

regretted that he could not finish the task. His ferocity often finds vent in words which become eloquent through their very calmness and conciseness; thus he speaks of an "unfortunate" peace, using the word "unfortunate" because so many princes of the royal family and other foreign princes are without the occupation of shedding blood. And again, "The Turks set a fine example to the French; in Turkey everybody is a soldier,—therefore what a power they have!"

Such a man, who knows only sufficient Latin to say his prayers, who does not wish to imitate Livy or Cæsar, whom he has read in French, displays clearly and unmistakably the reflex influences of a warlike and bloodthirsty temperament, and of a fanaticism in religion. In De Montluc's writings we see the mutual action and reaction of the soldier and the commentator—the combatant in a holy war whose sanctity was measured by the shedding of blood, and the combatant in another holy war, carried on within the soul, and counting its victories also by the consenting smiles of the God of battles. Montluc making the road by which he travelled fair to look on by the corpses of the Huguenots; Montluc, writing himself down as the favourite of heaven, because he had been successful in slaughtering his foes—these are evidently but two different aspects of the same picture. The civil war gave its tone and colour to the *Commentaries* of the stern and bloodthirsty captain, who helped to shape the annals of his time as he helped to create its actual history. Moreover, the actor in Montluc preceded the writer; he would probably never have written at all if old age and many wounds had not compelled him to take rest. Action had developed in him the desire and ability to write, and only two years before his death, when he was seventy-five years old, he began his *Commentaries*. He never "thought of the making of books," he himself tells us; "I was incapable of that." Incapable he may have been of a great original

production ; but he was capable of being a medium between the action of his own day and the action of the generations which succeeded him. The use of the sword had taught him the use of the pen. Let us admit that his style is incisive and clear, that it distinctly shows the man as he was and lived, a machine necessary for war, cruel, unscrupulous, with hardly any human feelings,<sup>1</sup> but honest and courageous, according to his own ideas, not approving of the St. Bartholomew's murder, most probably because he thought it cowardly, but not from any consideration for the lives of the Huguenots. He had taken for his device the following words : " Our lives and our goods are our king's, our soul belongs to God, honour belongs to us, for my king has no power over my honour." His actions remind us of those of the stern soldiers of Cromwell in Ireland, at the taking of Drogheda and Wexford, and perhaps still more of the deeds of the Irish rapparees in 1690.

#### § 4. ADVERSARIES OF THE LEAGUE.

The preachers and writers of the League had powerful and numerous opponents, both on the part of the king and amongst the ranks of the Huguenots. The most notable production of the royalist party, and indeed one of the most formidable literary documents ever given to the world, was the famous *Satire Ménippée* ; of which it has been said,<sup>2</sup> with a certain licence of hyperbole, that it was worth as much to Henry IV.

<sup>1</sup> Montluc was twice married, and had four sons and six daughters. He never mentions his wives or daughters, the latter of whom nearly all became nuns, but speaks of a Turkish horse, which " after his children he loved more than anything in the world." Two of his sons were killed at his side ; the third, Captain Peyrot, was killed at Madeira ; and Montaigne states that Montluc expressed his regret to him that he had always treated his son coldly and kept him at a distance, and had never shown him how much he loved him.

<sup>2</sup> By the President Hénault.



as the Battle of Ivry. Much, in fact, was needed after Ivry had been won before Henry of Navarre could consider himself firmly fixed upon his throne. He lightly said, when consenting to renounce his earlier faith, that Paris was "well worth a mass;" but the mass was attended, and he had yet his sternest enemies to fight. Eight months followed his change of religion before the king was able to enter Paris,<sup>1</sup> and they were months during which his fortunes trembled in the scales. Finally the party of the League disappeared before him; their rôle was played out. The Franciscan Garin was found concealed in a granary. The king was magnanimous, for he could afford it. "Don't hurt Garin," he said to those who brought the preaching friar before him. Boucher took refuge in Spain; Rose, Hamilton, Pelletier, and others were exiled; Cueilly might perhaps have remained; but with characteristic boldness he bearded the victorious king from the pulpit, declaring him to be an excommunicated heretic. He was arrested as he descended from his temporary vantage-ground, and ordered to quit the country. Henry attended at the Sorbonne in person, and said to the assembled doctors: "I have been preached against, I have been contumeliously treated, but I wish to forget all and to pardon all, even my parish-priest; and I except Boucher alone, who preaches lies and mischief at Beauvais. Yet I do not seek his life, but only that he should hold his tongue." And, at last, the long religious struggles were terminated—for a season, at least—by the Edict of Nantes,<sup>2</sup> in which liberty of worship was granted to every subject in the kingdom.

It is beyond question that nothing did more towards the moral victory of Henry over his subjects, and towards his peaceable confirmation in the royal dignities, than the *Satire Ménippée*, which, though not published until the spring of 1594, had been circulated some nine months earlier, partially,

<sup>1</sup> March 22, 1594.

<sup>2</sup> April 30, 1598.

and in manuscript, handed about from one individual to another, until it had almost produced its effect before it had reached the printer's office. The history of its origin is a literary episode which has inspired the mind of more than one French writer with eloquence and wit; and perhaps we cannot do better than quote the able account of M. Lenient.<sup>2</sup>

"On the old *quai des Orfèvres*, which to this day retains a certain venerable show of an age gone by, a stone's-throw from the Sainte Chapelle, not far from the great hall made memorable by the acting of the Basoche, and in the very house, it is said, where Boileau was to be born, lived a peaceful *conseiller-clerc* to Parliament, Jacques Gillot, a sort of Atticus of the town, a lover of letters, books, and men of wit. His table and his library attracted to his house, week by week, a select society of men of various professions, connected with the Church, the Court, the University, united by a close sympathy of studies and opinions. The little guest-chamber presently became a literary areopagus of learning and politics, where all the questions of the day were discussed. Of these there were abundance in that age, and the judges were competent. Gillot, in the first place, the Amphitryon who worthily held his place in this assemblage of amiable and witty talkers, a great collector of news, sprightly sayings and epigrams, whereof he compiled the *Chroniques gillotines*, a genuine journal of scandal of the days of the League. Next, a canon of Rouen, secretary to the Cardinal de Bourbon, Pierre Leroy, the suggester of the *Ménippée*, a worthy man, upright, and of rare modesty, who was as persevering in his obscure life as others are in making themselves notorious; a gentleman of Poitou, provost of the *connétablie*, Nicolas Rapin, a valiant pen and a valiant sword, who fought at Ivry under the banner of the Béarnais; a professor of the Collège Royal, a scholar and a poet, a jester, and a finished tippler,

<sup>2</sup> *La Satire en France au XVI<sup>e</sup>. siècle*, p. 429.

Passerat ; next, a former tutor of Henry IV., Florent Chrestien, a loyal heart, a trenchant wit ; and lastly, Pierre Pithou, a rival of de l'Hôpital,<sup>1</sup> the flower of learned and upright men. To these names we must add that of Gilles Durant, an easy and humorous rhymester, who intones the requiem of the Holy Union at the hour when it succumbs beneath the laughter and the hisses of the *Ménippée*."

So much for the men of this famous coterie ; but of their spirit also our critic has something valuable to say :—"Without being exactly enrolled in any sect or faction, their sympathies were entirely with the politic and moderate party. In them lived that ancient national spirit which we have found so vigorous on the morrow of Poitiers and Agincourt. They hate the foreigner, the trooper, the Italian, the Spaniard above all, with as much fervour as Alain Chartier and Eustache Deschamps<sup>2</sup> cursed the triumphant Englishmen ; good Catholics for the most part, not specially Roman, essentially Catholic, and with a fair share of enmity towards the Jesuits, who avenged themselves by the pen of Garasse. Some of them, like Florent Chrestien and Pithou, had passed through the camp of the Reformation to return again to Catholicism, but without fuss, like men who expect neither glory nor profit from their conversion. Such were the frequenters of the *quai des Orfèvres* : all Frenchmen of the old stock, having a racy mind, and that of the best—learned without pedantry, refined critics, waggish rhymesters, and inexhaustible retailers of narratives."

Of the writers of this "most excellent satire of the time," as Agrippa d'Aubigné, himself a satirist, calls it, the only professed Protestant was Passerat, to whom are attributed the bulk of the verses.<sup>3</sup> He was a man of no inconsiderable

<sup>1</sup> See vol. i. bk. iii. ch. 3, pp. 321-324.

<sup>2</sup> See vol. i. bk. ii. ch. 2, p. 193.

<sup>3</sup> D'Aubigné claims some verses for Rapin ; *Le Regret sur la mort de l'Asne ligueur*, added subsequently to the first publication, is by Gilles Durant.

learning, having been selected on the death of Ramus to fill the chair of eloquence and Latin poetry in the Collège de France. A finished Greek and Latin scholar, who kept undimmed amidst the chaos of revolution and the demoralisation of civil war the lustre of the revived classical spirit, his leisure moments were given to the satirical muse, whom he cultivated with all the *verve* of his predecessor Marot, all the freedom of his successor Regnier. The jurisconsult Pierre Pithou, perhaps the most profound thinker and scholar of the coterie, was an able and constant champion of the Gallican Church—of the reformed Catholicism which elected to hold a happy mean between the two combative extremes, and which had the strength of mind to reject most of the patent errors of Romanism without incurring the then very formidable reproach of schism. He had been with the Duke de Montmorency in England, and was nearly murdered on the St. Bartholomew night. During several months he was obliged to remain in hiding, and at last followed the example of Henry IV., and became a Roman Catholic. He was a great favourite of that king, and was appointed, against his will, *procureur-général au parlement*, an appointment which he resigned as soon as he was able to do so. The *Satire Ménippée* was a third tribute of imitation to the Greek satirist Menippos.<sup>1</sup> It consists of four parts.

(1.) *The virtue of the Catholicon of Spain* was written by Louis Leroy, and was the foundation upon which the composite satire was built up. Leroy was a Gallican priest from Normandy, chaplain to the Cardinal de Bourbon, who in a happy moment conceived the idea of sublimating the cruel, arrogant, and persecuting spirit of Roman and Spanish Catholicism in the form of a miraculous drug, the concoction whereof he attributes to a “very funny” quack, Philip de Seba, Cardinal of Piacenza, in Spain. This concoction has

<sup>1</sup> The first imitation was the *σπουδογελαῖος Μένιππος* of Lucian, whom Varro subsequently commemorated in his Menippean Satires.



been made in the college of Jesuits at Toledo, "where, having found that the simple Catholicon of Rome had no other effect than the edification of souls, and the production of salvation and happiness in the other world merely, chafing at so long a process, he thought of concocting this drug, so that, by dint of working, kneading, straining, calcining and refining, he had made a sovereign electuary which surpasses every philosopher's stone."<sup>1</sup> The proofs whereof were set forth in twenty or thirty articles, of which Leroy gives us twenty. Let us be satisfied with the last half-dozen.

"15. Have no religion, mock the priests as much as you like, and the sacraments of the Church, and all divine and human laws, eat flesh in Lent in spite of the Church, you shall need no other absolution and no other seasoning<sup>2</sup> than half a dram of Catholicon.

"16. Will you forthwith be a Cardinal? Rub one of the horns of your cap with *Higuero*,<sup>3</sup> it will become red, and you shall be turned into a Cardinal, were you the most incestuous and ambitious prelate in the world.

"17. Be as guilty as la Mothe-Serrand, convicted of coining like Mandreville, a . . . like Senault, a wretch like Bussy le Clerc, an atheist and ingrate like him who has a preferment of his own name,<sup>4</sup> only wash in some *Higuero*-water, and you are a spotless lamb, and a pillar of the faith.

"18. If some wise prelate or counsellor of State, a genuine French Catholic, presume to oppose the sly enterprises of the enemies of the State, provided you have one grain of this Catholicon on your tongue, you will be permitted to accuse him of wishing, whilst God sleeps, to let the Catholic religion go to ruin, as in England.

"19. Let some good preacher, not being a pedant, quit the rebel towns to assist in disenchanting the simple people, if he

<sup>1</sup> *Satyre Ménippée*, ed. Ratisbon, 3 vols. 1752, vol. i. p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> The original has *chardonnerette*, from the Latin *carduus*, a thistle; or seasoning with Spanish thistles.

<sup>3</sup> *Higuero del Inferno* was only another name for the Catholicon, and means literally "fig-tree from hell," because this tree, though it had a fair outward appearance, produced very bad fruit; and the Ligue did the same.

<sup>4</sup> Philippe Desportes, the poet, Abbé of Bonport.

have not a bit of *Higuero* in his hood, he may just return from whence he came.

"20. Let Spain set her foot on the throat of the honour of France, let the Lorrainers strive to rob the legitimate inheritances of the Princes of royal blood, let them oppose them no less vehemently than craftily, and dispute with them for the Crown, only provide yourself with Catholicon, you shall see that men will take more pleasure in seeing some unseasonable wrangle than in working with all their might to compel the cunning tyrants, trembling with fear, to let go their hold."

(2.) This episode of the two quacks,<sup>1</sup> whilst it serves to set clearly before us the corrupt spirit of the leaders of the League, is in the form of an introduction to the *Abridgment of the Farce of the States of the League, convoked in Paris on the tenth of February 1593; taken from the Memoirs of Mademoiselle de la Lande, alias the Bayonnese girl, and from the secret Confabulations between her and Father Commelet, a Jesuit*; which constitutes the bulk of the satire. The actual procession, of which the first part of this description is a parody, took place in 1590; and by its extravagance, its incongruities, its medley of the grave and the farcical, it seems to have richly deserved the severe chastisement which it received three years later at the hands of the coterie of the *quai des Orfèvres*. All the mean political rivalries which pretend to work only for the public good are exposed there; all these men, who take God as a shield to hide their own personal baseness, pass before us. The churchmen are in a majority; vicars, curates, monks and friars, wearing arms over their frocks and helmets above their cowls, with blunderbusses, daggers, pikes, and a whole arsenal of weapons about them, "all grown rusty by Catholic humility." One of these extemporised soldiers fires his gun by accident, and immediately there is a panic; the whole procession gets in disorder, and is only kept back by "a little holy water, just

<sup>1</sup> The other, a Lorrainer, was intended for Cardinal de Pellevé.

as flies and hornets are quieted by a little dust." After the procession the leaguers are described, as they assemble in the hall appointed for their meeting ; and much care is bestowed in the explanation of the tapestries with which the walls are hung—the first of which represents the golden calf of Scripture, "wherein Moses and Aaron were figured by the deceased King Henry III. and the late Cardinal de Bourbon ; but the golden calf was the image of the late Duc de Guise, raised on high, adored by the people." On others appeared the revolt of Absalom against David, the victories of Senlis, Arques, and Ivry, and the murder of Henry III. by "Frère Jacques Clément," on whose forehead was written in large letters the anagram of his name, *c'est l'enfer qui m'a créé*. Thus the assembly had their own condemnation always before their eyes.

Then, after they had all taken their places and when "the noise and the bad smells had subsided," follow at considerable length the harangues of the principal counsellors, which are conceived by their various authors in an excellent vein of paradox and humour. The supposed speakers utter their speeches, not as they really would have done, but as truth would have compelled them to do ; they do not glorify their deeds, but rather confess their iniquities. They go through their intellectual antics with all the ineptitude and helplessness of a box of marionettes, talking treason and nonsense, rage and folly, bad logic and morality ; crushing their best friends under the weight of their unintentional satire, contradicting each other, disproving and betraying themselves. The speech of the Duke de Mayenne, "Monsieur le Lieutenant," brother of the Duke de Guise, is the first, and opens thus : "You are all witness that since I have taken up arms for the Holy League, I have always had my preservation in such regard, that I have preferred heartily my private interest to the cause of God, who will know how to guard himself without me." Then follows a complete list of all his evil doings, crimes, desires, poltroonery, etc. The Legate's speech, written

by Jacques Gillot, comes next; it is a medley of Italian and Latin. He complains of the prolixity of his predecessor, and therefore mercifully cuts himself short whilst preaching massacre and extermination, all in the name of religion. Then follow the speeches of the Cardinal de Pellevé, written by Florent Chrestien; the Archbishop of Lyons's by Nicholas Rapin, the bellicose Rector Rose's by the same, Monsieur Rieux's, on behalf of the nobility; and finally comes the long harangue of d'Aubray, representative of the *Tiers-État*, which in the form of an elaborate complaint of the evils under which, France was groaning, betrays the evil character of the defence urged by the promoters of the League. It is a graphic picture of the times, expressed in a true spirit of eloquence, which vindicates for Pithou, its author, a high place amongst the prose writers and orators of the century. Listen to one paragraph of his nervous and vigorous eloquence, in which the true patriot speaks out from behind the mask of the puppet.

"The depth of our miseries is that, amidst so many misfortunes and necessities, we are permitted neither to complain nor to demand succour; and, with death between our teeth, we must say that we are well, and too happy to be wretched in so good a cause. O Paris, which is no longer Paris, but a den of wild beasts, a citadel of Spaniards, Walloons, and Neapolitans, a refuge and safe retreat of thieves, murderers, and assassins; will you never again recognise your dignity, and remember what you have been at the price of what you are; will you never recover from the frenzy which, in the place of a legitimate and gracious king, has spawned for you fifty kinglets and fifty tyrants? Behold you in irons, behold you in the Spanish inquisition, more intolerable a thousand times, and more hard to endure to minds born free and frank, as are the French, than the most cruel deaths which the Spaniards could devise. You could not support a slight increase of taxes and dues, and a few new edicts which affected you but little; but now you endure that men should pillage your houses; that they should exact even your blood, that they should imprison your senators, that they should drive



out and banish your good citizens and counsellors; that they should hang and massacre your principal magistrates. You see it and you endure it; you not only endure it, but you approve of it and praise it, and dare not and cannot do otherwise. You could not endure your good-natured king, so free, so familiar, who made himself like a fellow-citizen and burgher of your town, which he enriched, which he adorned with sumptuous buildings, to which he added strong and proud ramparts, decorated with honourable privileges and exemptions. What do I say? Could not endure him? Far worse: you drove him from his town, from his palace, from his couch. What, drove him? You pursued him. What, pursued him? You assassinated him, canonised the assassin, and made bonfires at his death. And now you see how much this death profited you; for it is the cause why another has risen in his place, much more vigilant, more painstaking, far more warlike, who will know well how to press you closer, as you have, to your cost, already discovered."<sup>1</sup>

(3.) These harangues are themselves interspersed here and there with epigrams and verses. The speech of the Rector Rose has a couple, no doubt the work of Rapin; whilst several occur in Pithou's oration of M. d'Aubray. These latter, with a few more in the introductions to the several

<sup>1</sup> "L'extrémité de nos misères est, qu'entre tant de malheurs et de nécessités il ne nous est pas permis de nous plaindre, ny demander secours: et faut qu'ayant la mort entre les dents, nous disions que nous nous portons bien, et que nous sommes trop heureux d'estre mal-heureux pour si bonne cause. O Paris! qui n'est plus Paris, mais une spelunke de bestes farouches, une Citadelle d'Espagnols, Wallons, et Napolitains; un asyle, et seure retraite de voleurs, meurtriers et assassinateurs, ne veux-tu jamais te ressentir de ta dignité, et te souvenir qui tu as esté, au prix de ce que tu es? Ne veux-tu jamais te guerir de cette frénésie qui pour un légitime et gracieux roy t'a engendré cinquante Royetelets et cinquante Tyrans? Te voilà aux fers, te voilà en l'inquisition d'Espagne, plus intolérable mille fois, et plus dure à supporter aux esprits nés libres et francs, comme sont les François, que les plus cruelles morts, dont les Espagnols se scauroient adviser. Tu n'as peu supporter une légère augmentation de tailles et d'offices, et quelques nouveaux édicts qui ne t'importoient nullement; mais tu endures qu'on pille tes maisons, qu'on te rançonne jusques au sang, qu'on emprisonne tes sénateurs, qu'on chasse et bannisse tes bons citoyens et conseillers: qu'on pende, qu'on massacre tes principaux magistrats: tu le vois, et tu l'endures: tu ne l'endures pas seule-

speeches, and some five or six hundred lines comprising a distinct division of the *Satyre*, are the work of Passerat. There is a good deal of spirit and point in several of these epitaphs, epigrams, and apostrophes; though, of course, it would be impossible to measure by our own standard the effect which they must have produced at the time of their publication. Take, as an example, this *dizaine* "to the Spaniards concerning their doubloons."<sup>1</sup>

"Heavens, how fine and yellow they are,  
Your doubloons;  
Let some more be fetched,  
Ye demi-Moors,  
Amongst your yellow sands;  
Or else go back,  
Swarthy ones.  
Paris, which is no prey for you,  
Will pack you off  
With many long faces." "

Or again, with a point steeped in gall, because the badge of the house of Guise, which was the rallying-sign of the Leaguers, was a double cross, called *Croix de Lorraine* :—

ment, mais tu l'approuves, et le loues, et n'oserois, et ne sçauois faire autrement. Tu n'as peu supporter ton Roy débonnaire, si facile, si familier, qui s'estoit rendu comme concitoyen, et bourgeois de ta ville, qu'il a enrichie, qu'il a embellie de somptueux bastimens, accrue de forts et superbes ramparts, ornée de privilèges et exemptions honorables. Que dis-je, peu supporter? C'est bien pis; tu l'as chassé de sa ville, de sa maison, de son lit. Quoy, chassé? Tu l'as poursuivy. Quoy, poursuivy? Tu l'as assassiné, canonisé l'assassinateur et fait des feux de joye de sa mort. Et tu vois maintenant combien cette mort t'a profité; car elle est cause qu'un autre est monté en sa place, bien plus vigilant, bien plus laborieux, bien plus guerrier et qui sçaura bien te serrer de plus près, comme tu as à ton dam déjà expérimenté."

<sup>1</sup> *La Satire Ménippée*, vol. i. p. 202.

"Mon Dieu qu'ils sont beaux et  
blonds,  
Vos doublons;  
Faites en chercher encores,  
Demy-Mores,  
Parmy vos jaulnes Sablons.

Ou bien vous en retournez,  
Bezanez.  
Paris qui n'est vostre proye  
Vous renvoye  
Avecques cent pieds de nez."

\* Tell me what this means.  
 That Leaguers wear a double cross !  
 'Tis because the League crucifies  
 Jesus Christ a second time." 1

Nor did Passerat spare even the personal characteristics of his foe. The Duke de Guise, who was distantly related to the Royal stock, had a flat nose. Passerat wrote :—

" The League, being nonplussed,  
 And the Leaguers sore astounded,  
 Have thought of a fine device :  
 To make a king without a nose." 2

Whereto is added " A Rejoinder for the Duke : "

" The little Guise makes light  
 Of all your quatrains and sonnets ;  
 For, being flat-nosed and evil-smelling,  
 He does not feel when you prick him." 3

After these verses comes *An Address of the Printer about the explanation of the word Higuiero d'Infierno, and other things which he has learned from the author.* This pleasant *jeu d'esprit*, in the true Pantagruelistic vein, is followed by a "supplement," entitled *News from the Regions of the Moon*, which, however, was not contained in the earlier editions of the satire.

1 " Mais dites-moy que signifie  
 Que les Ligueurs ont double croix ?  
 C'est qu'en la Ligue on crucifie  
 Jésus Christ encore une fois."

2 " La Ligue se trouvant camuse,  
 Et les Ligueurs fort estonnez,  
 Se sont advisez d'une ruse ;  
 C'est, de se faire un Roy sans nez."

3 " Le petit Guisard fait la nique  
 A tous vos quatrains et sonnets :  
 Car estans camus et punais  
 Il ne sent point quand on le pique."

The points partly depend on the double signification of *camus*, which means "flat-nosed" and "nonplussed," and on the equivocation between *sentir*, meaning "to smell" and "to feel."

## CHAPTER II.

## § 1. THE DIDACTIC SCHOOL OF POETRY.

So far as we have already seen, the literary result of the Renaissance in France was to revive ancient classical learning, to expand the scope of natural and metaphysical science, to fan into fervent heat the embers of religious controversy, to add a stimulus to satire, and to sharpen the edge of a trenchant national intellect. The *esprit narquois* of the Gaul had been developed to its highest pitch in Rabelais; his calm indifferentism had apparently reached its acme in Montaigne. These advances had been made and these triumphs had been reaped through the medium of a prose style, which, elevated and ennobled by the genius of those who made it their handmaiden, seemed to spring suddenly from infancy to maturity without passing through the long and tedious phases of adolescence. Calvin alone had done as much for French prose as was done by the greatest of his contemporaries in Italy, in Spain, or in England. He was the first to set before his fellow-countrymen a grand model of eloquent and finished expression, and to teach them the vast suppleness and capabilities of the national tongue. It must have appeared to the national prose-writers of the sixteenth century that the poetic form was completely insufficient for the enunciation of the loftiest ideas and the deepest sentiments; that prose, and prose alone, was worthy to be the vehicle of the best moral and intellectual products.

Such, at all events, was the virtual conclusion to which



the literary Renaissance was leading the cultivated minds of France when the Pleiade<sup>1</sup> suddenly shone above the horizon. Towards the middle of the sixteenth century the few poets to whom it was possible to assign anything like literary value were either dreamily waiting in the beaten tracks of the old masters wherein the last blade of living grass had long since been trodden into the mire, or else were content to take Marot as the model of a new form of poetic expression. Of these latter the least feeble was Melin de Saint-Gelais,<sup>2</sup> who lived long enough to see, and unsuccessfully to rail at, the new-fangled elegances of the school of Ronsard. Marot died in 1544: five years later Joachim du Bellay,<sup>3</sup> nephew of the Cardinal de Bellay, who had himself earned his place in the annals of French literature, published his *Deffense et Illustration de la langue françoise*. The book is crude and over-forcible, as might be expected from the youth of its author; but it was the first articulate profession of the classical theory of French poetry, and marks the inauguration of a literary epoch—any rather the establishment of a new mould and groove of taste—than which none more specially characteristic has been, or will have to be, considered by us.

The passage from the domain of feeling to the domain of form, the step which leads from the preponderance of feeling in literature to the pre-eminence of literary form, has to be taken sooner or later by all nations which are swayed by the classical spirit more powerfully than by any other. The time is sure to come when men are wearied, or ashamed, of perpetually moving in the cycle of ideas and phrases peculiar to the classical tongues of antiquity: when, moreover, they begin to find a greater facility of expression in their own vernacular, and are ambitious to mould their new language and

<sup>1</sup> The Pleiade, after the Greek Pleiads, or sailing stars, was the name given to seven French poets, Ronsard, Du Bart, Du Bellay, Belleau, Jodelle, Baif, and Tyard.

<sup>2</sup> 1491-1558.

<sup>3</sup> 1524-1560.

literature on the model of those which they have set before them as their standard of propriety. The notion occurs to some poets—to one or two amongst them in particular—that the language of their everyday life may become, as it were, the Latin of their own age : that they themselves may be the Tacitus and the Ovid, or at least the Plautus and the Ennius of a new classical epoch. Thenceforth the subject, the naturalness, the verisimilitude of what they write, seems less and less important to them ; to establish and stereotype a phrase, a metre, a form, a paragraph, to select and perpetuate the model of a poem or an essay, becomes in their eyes the most worthy aim of a literary man. The change is naturally more striking in poetry than in prose ; at all events it is made more easily and rapidly in the style which most readily lends itself to specialities of form. Such a change was made in France in the middle of the sixteenth century by the poets of the Pléiade. The new fashion of French versification was destined to exert its influence during more than two centuries ; in fact, up to and beyond the Revolution. We shall have occasion to consider its nature and effects hereafter ; for the present let us say that for upwards of two hundred years France had no poet of superlative genius or originality. Dramatists, versifiers of high didactic force and beauty, she was to possess in abundance ; but great poets, none. The man who consents to lace and pad his body, to wear stays and a wig, may look excellently well in a minuet or a court-pageant ; but the free play of his limbs, the natural agility and vigour which he might have enjoyed, must be sacrificed on the shrine of his adopted fashion.

## § 2. RONSARD AND HIS FOLLOWERS.

Joachim du Bellay sounded the call to arms which announced the opening of this new literary campaign, and

raised the standard beneath which the *Pléiade*, or the *Brigade*, as they began by calling themselves, were originally rallied. Though Ronsard was in the finest sense the leader of the band—certainly the brightest star of the constellation—it does not clearly appear that he was in any degree the instigator of du Bellay's work. The two men were of the same age, and the bond between them, at all events after the year 1549, was a close and lasting one; but it may be taken for granted that the *Défense et Illustration* did much to confirm, if not to form the talent of Ronsard. Listen to the declamation by which the young apostle of the neo-classical faith enforces his doctrine.

"O how I long to see these springs wither, to chastise these small youths, to beat down these attempts, to dry up these Fountains! . . . How I wish these Forlorn ones, these Humble Expectants, these Exiles from Bliss, these Slaves, these Obstructions, were packed back again to the Round Table. Leave all these old French poems to the floral games of Toulouse, and to the *puy*<sup>1</sup> of Rouen: such as rondeaus, ballads, virelais, royal songs, lays, and other such spicy things, which corrupt the taste of our language, and are of no other value than to bear witness to our ignorance! . . . Be assured, my readers, that he will be the genuine poet whom I look for in our language, who shall make me indignant, shall soothe and rejoice me, shall cause me to grieve, to love, to hate, to wonder, to be astounded: in short, who shall hold the bridle of my affections, turning me to this side or that at his pleasure."

To reach this high ideal the poet must labour incessantly, place his chief reliance on the study of the ancients, and "by night and day turn over the leaves of the Greek and Latin models."<sup>2</sup>

"Thither, then, O Frenchmen, advance courageously, towards that illustrious Roman city, and with the booty plundered from

<sup>1</sup> See vol. i. bk. ii. ch. 4, p. 230, note 1.

<sup>2</sup> "Feuilette de main nocturne et journalle:" *nocturnâ versate manu, versate diurnâ*.

her, as you have more than once done, adorn your temples and your altars. Fear no more those cackling geese, that fierce Manlius, and that traitor Camillus, who, under the pretext of good faith, surprises you in your nakedness, as you count out the ransom of the Capitol. Enter that false-tongued Greece, and sow there once again the famous nation of the Gallo-Greeks. Pillage without scruple the sacred treasures of that Delphic temple, as you did of old, and fear no more that dumb Apollo, his false oracles, and his rebounding arrows. Remember your ancient Marseilles, the second Athens, and your Gallic Hercules, drawing the peoples behind him by their ears, with a chain attached to his tongue."<sup>1</sup>

The counsel was plainly and rudely put; and it was the counsel which the young Pierre de Ronsard<sup>2</sup> kept steadily before him during the laborious years in which he deliberately prepared himself to be to France the poet of the future.

Du Bellay wrote also the *Olive*,<sup>3</sup> a collection of a hundred and fifteen sonnets, a few odes, and several poems in the Alexandrine measure. He brought the latter to great perfection, and his *Hymn on Deafness*, and the *Poet Courtier* bear witness to it. In general he endeavoured to free French verse from many of its most galling fetters, tried to vary the position and emphasis of the cæsura, did not scruple to run one line into another, and did not insist upon the alternation

<sup>1</sup> Là donques, François, marchez courageusement vers ceste superbe cité romaine, et des serves despoilles d'elle (comme vous avez fait plus d'une fois) ornez vos temples et autels. Ne craignez plus ces oyes criardes, ce fier Manlie et ce traître Camille, qui, soubz ombre de bonne foy vous surprennent tous nuds contans la rençon du Capitole; donnez en ceste Grece menteresse et y semez encore un coup la fameuse nation des Gallogrecs. Pillez-moy sans conscience les sacrez thresors de ce temple delphique, ainsi que vous avez fait autrefois, et ne craignez plus ce muet Apollon, ses faux oracles, ne ses flesches rebouchées. Vous souvienns de vostre ancienne Marseille, secondes Athènes, et de vostre Hercule gallique, tirant les peuples après lui, par leurs oreilles, avecques une chaîne attachée à sa langue." <sup>2</sup> 1524-1585.

<sup>3</sup> An anagram of Viole, a lady from Angers, whom he celebrates.

of male and female rhymes. Here is one of his sonnets describing Venice :—

“O Magny! you should see these coward Magnificoes,  
 Their splendid arsenal, their vessels, their address,  
 Their palace, their St. Mark, their harbour, their Rialto,  
 Their change, their traffic, their bartering, and their bank ;  
 You should behold their long-beak'd antique hoods,  
 Their broad-sleeved gowns, and their caps without brim,  
 Their talk so coarse, their gravity, their demeanour,  
 And then their sage advice on public questions.  
 You'll see their senate balloting on all things :  
 And everywhere their gondolas afloat.  
 Their dames, their feasts, their solitary living :  
 But the best sight of all is to behold  
 These aged wittols going to wed the sea,  
 Whose spouses they are, and the Turk her leman.”<sup>1</sup>

Spenser was a great admirer of Du Bellay ; he translated his *Antiquités de Rome* under the title of *The Ruines of Rome*, and annexed to it the following envoi :—

“Bellay, first garland of free Poësie  
 That France brought forth, though fruitfull of brave wits,  
 Well worthie thou of immortalitie,  
 That long hast traveld, by thy learned writs,

“Il fait bon voir, Magny, ces coions magnifiques,  
 Leur superbe arsenal, leurs vaisseaux, leur abord,  
 Leur S. Marc, leur palais, leur Realte, leur Port,  
 Leurs changes, leurs profits, leur banque, et leurs trafiques,  
 Il fait bon voir le bec de leurs chaprons antiques,  
 Leurs robes à grand' manche, et leurs bonnets sans bord,  
 Leur parler tout grossier, leur gravité, leur port,  
 Et leurs sages advis aux affaires publiques.  
 Il fait bon voir de tout leur senat balloter,  
 Il fait bon voir par tout leurs gondolles flotter.  
 Leurs femmes, leurs festins, leur vivre solitaire :  
 Mais ce que l'on en doit le meilleur estimer,  
 C'est quand ces vieux cocus vont espouser la mer  
 Dont ils sont les maris et le Turc l'adultere.”

Olde Rome out of her ashes to revive,  
 And give a second life to dead decayes!  
 Needes must he all eternitie survive,  
 That can to other give eternall dayes:  
 Thy dayes therefore are endles, and thy praise  
 Excelling all, that ever went before."

The English poet translated twice the French one's *Visions*; first in the year 1569, in blank verse, and the second time in 1591, in rhyme. We give a sonnet of the latter translation, as a sample of a perfect copy by a great master:—

"On high hills top I saw a stately frame,  
 An hundred cubits high by iust assize,  
 With hundredth pillours fronting faire the same,  
 All wrought with diamond after Dorick wize:  
 Nor brick nor marble was the wall in view,  
 But shining christall, which from top to base  
 Out of her womb a thousand rayons threw,  
 One hundred steps of Afrike golds enchase:  
 Golde was the parget; and the seeling bright  
 Did shine all scaly with great plates of golde;  
 The floore of iasp and emeraude was dight.  
 O worlds vainesse! Whiles thus I did behold,  
 An earthquake shooke the hill from lowest seat,  
 And overthrew this frame with ruine great."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Sur la croupe d'un mont je vis une fabrique  
 De cent brasses de haut : cent colonnes d'un rond,  
 Toutes de diamans ornoient le brave front,  
 Et la façon de l'oeuvre estoit à la Dorique,  
 La muraille n'estoit de marbre ni de brique,  
 Mais d'un luisant cristal, qui du sommet au fond,  
 Elançoit mille rais de son ventre profond,  
 Sur cent degrez dorez du plus fin or d'Afrique.  
 D'or estoit le lambris, et le sommet encor  
 Reluisoit escaillé de grandes lames d'or:  
 Le pavé fut de jaspe, et d'esmauraude fine.  
 O vanité du monde! Un soudain tremblement  
 Faisant crouler du mont la plus basse racine,  
 Renverse ce beau lieu depuis le fondement."



And now we have arrived at Ronsard, a native of Vendôme, the greatest of the poets of the Pléiade. His father was "maître d'hôtel" to Francis the First; he himself began life as a page in the service of the Duke of Orleans,<sup>1</sup> whilst the latter travelled in Italy and in England. He may have met Wyatt, and Surrey, and Gabriel Harvey; and indeed there are features in his poems which are not without resemblance to the younger classical school of the English Tudor period. For a while he followed the profession of arms; but at length, resolving to be—what he can hardly be said to have been born—a poet, he gave up the pleasures to which his station entitled him, studied Greek and Latin, and placed himself, in the year 1544, under the care of Jean Daurat, whom, as well as his fellow-student Baif, he subsequently installed in the Pléiade. No less than seven years were devoted to this arduous second education; the principal aim of which was, no doubt, to amass and arrange a whole dictionary of poetic terms and phrases; to concoct an entire cento of poetic models, in the form which commended itself to the classical judgment of the master, and to the fastidious ear of the pupil. His first poems were not given to the public until the year 1550, at which time not only Joachim du Bellay, but also Jodelle, Remi Belleau, and Pontus de Tyard had already professed their adhesion to the new school of thought, and had made contributions to the poetry of the future. The latest comer of the seven poets known as the Pléiade was destined at once to eclipse his companions, and to add immediate fame to the company of which he was the chosen leader.

The title of the work in which Ronsard made his *début* bears witness to the deliberation with which he had sketched out the plan of his poetic labours: *Les quatre premiers livres des Odes de P. de Ronsard, Vandomois; ensemble son Bocage.*

<sup>1</sup> Charles, third son of the king.



The same purpose appeared yet more clearly in the preface. "If men," says this new aspirant for public favour, in the very first words which he had addressed to the public, "whether in past ages or in the present, have deserved any praise for having diligently followed in the track of those who, running in the career of their originality, have long since passed the goal, how much more ought the runner to be extolled who, riding freely through the Attic and Roman plains, dares to follow an unknown path to immortality! Not, reader, that I am so greedy of glory, or so warped by ambitious presumption that I would force you to give me that which time, it may be, shall bestow; but when you have styled me the first French lyric author, and him who has guided others in the track of so praiseworthy a labour, then you will have rendered me that which you owe me."

This proud appeal was listened to and granted on the spot. For the remainder of his life Ronsard was courted and flattered to the top of his bent. Scarcely, however, had he been laid in the tomb, when his successors, even those who unconsciously owed most to his influence, began to dispute his title to fame. Malherbe ridiculed him, Boileau crushed him with an epigram,<sup>1</sup> Arnault declared that "it was a dishonour to the (French) nation to have valued the pitiable poems of Ronsard." Strange indeed is the fate of the man who, repudiated and neglected in the ages when his influence was virtually paramount, receives a second and fuller appreciation in an age which seeks its poetic inspiration at least in part from the earlier sources which he himself despised. In 1872 his native town erected a monument to "Pierre de Ronsard, premier Lyrique français."

The first four books of Ronsard's Odes were quickly followed by the fifth, which was published in 1552, together with his *Amours*. From that moment he was accepted as

<sup>1</sup> "Réglant tout, brouilla tout, fit un art à sa mode."

the great poet of the day. He was hailed as the Pindar, the Horace, the Petrarch of France; and the very Academy of *Jeux floraux* which du Bellay had laughed at, sent him, as the most appropriate expression of their regard, a massive silver Minerva. The most illustrious men in the country received him with open arms, and monarchs themselves hastened to show their appreciation of his genius. Marguerite of Savoy accepted the dedication of his *Hymns* in 1555, and of the sequel of his *Amours* in the following year. Mary Stuart, in a similar manner, patronised the first collected edition of his works, and sent him two thousand crowns and a costly piece of plate (1560); Queen Elizabeth sent him a diamond of value as a token of her regard. Catherine de Medici publicly thanked him for his *Discourse about the Miseries of these times* (1563), directed against the Calvinists, and suggested to him the publication of his heroic poem the *Franciade* (1572); whilst her sons learned his verses by heart, and assigned to him pension after pension. And, greater homage than all, Tasso submitted to his judgment the first outline of the *Jerusalem delivered*. Montaigne himself declared that French poetry had attained its standard, and could not advance beyond Ronsard. In a sense, he was right. Until the nineteenth century, perhaps, it never did. But, on the other hand, there were those amongst the contemporaries of Ronsard who despised, or at least affected heartily to despise him. Mellin de Saint-Gelais, of whom the poet confessed that he had been *tenaillé par sa pince*, called him ironically *le roi des poètes et le poète des rois*, and lost no opportunity of satirising him. Charles Fontaine,<sup>1</sup> who in the *Quintil Horatien* warmly controverted the positions taken up by Du Bellay, was a bitter and persistent enemy of the *immortaliseurs d'eux mêmes*, as he styled the Pléiade, and an enthusiastic, if weak and ineffective champion of the old

<sup>1</sup> 1513-1587.

school. More formidable still, Rabelais flouted the elegant, fastidious, and inflated euphuist, whom he no doubt lampooned in the description of the Limousin scholar who "flayeth the Latin . . . who doth highly Pindarize."<sup>1</sup> Ronsard did not answer Rabelais until after the latter's death, when he wrote an epitaph of which we may hope that he lived to be ashamed. Time wrote another and more pungent epitaph upon them both; for whilst the repute of Rabelais has increased steadily year by year, not a single selection of Ronsard's works was printed between 1630 and 1828, and only a complete edition of all his works in 1857, and the nine following years.

The preponderating opinion, even in the present day, is probably that which an eminent French critic<sup>2</sup> has expressed, not without copious citations in support of his judgment; "Ronsard has no ideas, and he is very poor in sentiment." Let us understand what this implies; for if we understand it in the case of Ronsard we shall have advanced half-way towards an appreciation of the bulk of French poetry—at all events of that produced between the Renaissance and the Revolution.

Rich in sentiment Ronsard undoubtedly was not, because he sternly confined himself to a language whose vocabulary of sentiment was limited—which could indeed most admirably express what had been felt often and of old, by men who had wedded their own fresh ideas to happy words, but which could not supply terms for entirely new experiences, and which could not, therefore, be a medium of originality. It is not necessary to suppose that Ronsard was destitute of original ideas, or that he was incapable of deep sentiment; but he chose deliberately to limit his power of expression, and, as a consequence, he virtually limited his power of

<sup>1</sup> See vol. i. bk. iii. ch. 2, page 292.

<sup>2</sup> M. Paul Albert, in *La littérature française des origines à la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*.

experience and conception. He selected a sphere wherein to move—a field whose boundaries were marked, and therefore narrow. From that time forward he had cut off from himself all the undiscovered or ignored regions which lay beyond the circumscribed line, not, however, without leaving himself an infinite variety. To say, therefore, that Ronsard had no ideas is inexact; to say that he was poor in sentiment is vague, or at least only relatively true. He had ideas—all the ideas and illustrations of classical authors; and he was able to translate, to imitate, to vary, to recombine these, and to apply them to the circumstances of his own age, with as much freshness and charm as his talent would allow. He had sentiment; and, so far as his literary fashion was concerned, there was no reason why this sentiment should be less forcible or deep than the sentiment of a Sophocles, a Theocritus, a Propertius, or an Ovid. Let us be still more just to the *Pléiade* and their successors; they had open to them as their subject-matter the whole range of human intellect and passion, and if it is necessary to the enjoyment of their readers that they should first be cultivated up to a certain point of refinement and critical taste, yet, this point attained, there can be no reason why the judgment or the feelings of a cultivated man should not be as deeply moved by them as the judgment and feelings of others are moved by writers of greater licence and more startling originality. No doubt Ronsard and his friends pushed to an extreme their reliance upon and imitation of the ancient classical authors, and that to be compelled now-a-days to read their poems as a duty, which their contemporaries read for pleasure, would produce nothing short of nausea. No doubt their verses are stuffed and crammed with classical names, allusions, fables, and illustrations;<sup>1</sup> but this

<sup>1</sup> Ronsard did much to purify and strengthen the French language, as Englishmen in the same age were doing for their own. He himself boasts:—

“ Adonques pour hausser ma langue maternelle  
Indompté de labeur, je travaillai pour elle ;

must not blind us to the fact that the poetry of the Pléiade contains much that is genuinely beautiful, and capable of affording real pleasure to the developed appetite of the nineteenth century.

In short, if you take up Ronsard, or say, such a sample of him as has been presented to us in a carefully edited volume of selections,<sup>1</sup> when you are in the mood for reading his poems, you will, on the whole, like him. What more can be said for ninety-nine out of a hundred poets of the present day? Ronsard's sonnet to his friend Pontus de Tyard, à propos of his critics, is more than dignified and elegant; it is just:—

“ Tyard, I was blamed when I began to write,  
Because I was obscure to ordinary people;  
But now they say that I am the very reverse,  
And that I belie myself by speaking too vulgarly.  
You whose toil learnedly brings to birth  
Undying works, tell me, what should I do?  
Tell me (for you know everything) how am I to please  
This obstinate monster so diverse in judgment.  
When I thunder in my verse, they are afraid to read me;  
When my voice is low, they do nought but malign me.  
Tell me by what bond, power, pinchers, or nails,  
Shall I hold this Proteus, who changes at every turn?  
Tyard, I understand you, we must let him talk,  
And laugh at him, as he laughs at us.”<sup>2</sup>

Je fis des mots nouveaux, je rappelai les vieux,  
Si bien que son renom je poussai jusqu'aux cieux. . . .  
Et mis la poésie en tel ordre qu'après  
Le Français fut égal aux Romains et aux Grecs.”

<sup>1</sup> *Poésies choisies de P. de Ronsard*, ed. by L. Becq de Fouquières.

<sup>2</sup> Tyard, on me blasmoit à mon commencement,  
De quoi j'estois obscur au simple populaire;  
Mais ou dit aujourd huy que je suis au contraire,  
Et que je me démens parlant trop bassement.  
Toy de qui le labeur enfante doctement  
Des livres immortels, dy-moy, que doy-je faire?  
Dy-moy (car tu sais tout) comme doy je complaire



It is for the poet to write, to influence, to be a "maker" of men by being a maker of words, and, in addition, to let the judgment of the public go by default. Few poets have exerted a greater reflex influence upon their generation and their posterity than Ronsard; few poets have more remarkably illustrated the capriciousness of the popular judgment.

For expressing the beauties of nature, as well as of art, the characteristic ideas and sentiments of classic language are peculiarly appropriate; and the muse of Ronsard excels in natural description. There is much life and vigour, much licence even, and freshness, in the *Folatrissime Voyage d'Hercueil*, written to commemorate a picnic at Arcueil in the summer of 1549. Two or three stanzas—shaped in one of the poet's favourite metres—will suffice to convey the peaceful and refined mood in which Ronsard most frequently sat down to write:—

" Let them lavish, let them scatter  
The viands  
With a liberal hand.  
And the pasties on which the ancient  
Women of Memphis  
Feasted the effeminate Roman.

Sweet divine dew  
From Anjou,  
Bacchus, save your liquor!  
The friendship which I feel for thee  
Is so strong  
That I have it always in my heart.

A ce monstre testu divers en jugement ?  
Quand je tonne en mes vers, il a peur de me lire ;  
Quand ma voix se desenfle, il ne fait qu'en mesdire  
Dy-moi de quel lien, force, tenaille, ou clous  
Tiendray-je ce Proté qui se change à tous coups ?  
Tyard, je t'enten bien, il le faut laisser dire,  
Et nous rire de luy, comme il se rit de nous.

Never man, until he dies  
 Remains  
 Perfectly happy ;  
 Always with gladness  
 Sadness  
 Is secretly mingled." <sup>1</sup>

There is little or no affectation there ; still less in the following exquisite poem, than which nothing could be more natural, more straightforward, and more genuine in its sentiment. It is dedicated " To Cassandra," and might be addressed, with perfect fitness, to any young and lovely girl to whom one would teach the philosophy of nature.

" Come, darling, let us see if the rose,  
 Which this morning had displayed  
 Her robe of purple to the sun,  
 To-night has not lost  
 The folds of her purpled robe,  
 And her hue, so like your own.

Alas ! see in how short a time  
 Darling, she has upon the earth,  
 Alas ! alas ! suffered her beauties to fall !  
 O Nature, thou very step-mother,  
 Since such a flower only lasts  
 From morning until eve !

Therefore, if you'll believe me, darling,  
 Whilst your years bloom

<sup>1</sup> " Qu'on prodigue, qu'on repande,  
 La viande  
 D'une libérale main,  
 Et les pasts dont l'ancienne  
 Memphienne  
 Festoya le mol Romain.  
 Douce rosée divine  
 Angevine,  
 Bacchus, sauve ta liqueur !

L'amitié que je te porte  
 Est tant forte  
 Que je l'ay tousjours au cœur.  
 Jamais l'homme, tant qu'il meure,  
 Ne demeure  
 Fortuné parfaitement ;  
 Tousjours avec la lyesse  
 La tristesse  
 Se mesle secrettement."



In their greenest freshness,  
Pluck, pluck your youth :  
Because old age, like this flower,  
Will make your beauty wither."<sup>1</sup>

In 1572, twenty days after the St. Bartholomew massacre, appeared Ronsard's great epic poem the *Franciade*, on which he had been engaged for many years, and which was intended to sing, in twenty-four books, the mighty deeds of "the race of French kings, descended from Francion, a child of Hector and a Trojan by birth." Only four books, forming an approximate total of five or six thousand verses, appeared, and the death of Charles IX. put a stop to its further publication. Our author himself says—

"If king Charles had lived  
I would have finished this long work ;  
As soon as death conquered him,  
His death vanquished my courage."<sup>2</sup>

But it is possible that want of success may have been the real cause of the non-appearance of the whole, for at the end of the fourth book he candidly confesses that

"The Frenchmen who will read my verses,  
If they be not Greeks and Romans,  
Instead of this book will have  
But a cumbersome weight in their hands."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Mignonne, allons voir si la rose,  
Qui ce matin avait desclose  
Sa robe de pourpre au Soleil,  
A point perdu ceste vesprée  
Les plis de sa robe pourprée  
Et son teint au vostre pareil.  
Las ! voyez comme en pen d'espace,  
Mignonne, elle a dessus la place  
Las ! las ! ses beautez laiss   cheoir !  
O vrayment marastre Nature,  
Puis qu'une telle fleur ne dure  
Que du matin jusques au soir !  
Donc, si vous me croyez, mignonne,

Tandis que vostre   ge fleuronne  
En sa plus verte nouveaut  ,  
Cueillez, cueillez, vostre jeunesse ;  
Comme    ceste fleur la vieillesse  
Fera ternir vostre beaut  ."

<sup>2</sup> "Si le roy Charles eust vescu,  
J'eusse achev   ce long ouvrage ;  
Si tost que la mort l'eust vaincu,  
Sa mort me vainquit le courage."

<sup>3</sup> "Les Fran  ois qui mes vers liront,  
S'ils ne sont et Grecs et Romains,  
En lieu de ce livre ils n'auront  
Qu'un pesant faix entre les mains."

In the *Eglogues*, chiefly published in 1560, Ronsard makes the "first travelling shepherd" speak as follows of Queen Elizabeth and of Mary Stuart :—

"Passing on the other shore, I went to see the English,  
A land right opposite to Gallia's coast ;  
I saw their ocean agitated by the waves,  
I saw their beautiful queen, chaste and virtuous ;  
Around her palace I saw these great lords  
Gentle, handsome and courteous, magnanimous and strong,  
I saw them revere Charles and Catherine,  
Having sworn peace, and thrown their ancient quarrel  
Far to the winds and the waves.  
I saw the Scottish queen, wise and fair,  
Who in body and mind seemed a goddess ;  
Near to her eyes I drew ; but they were two suns,  
Two suns of beauty without peers.  
I saw them dimmed with dewy moisture clear,  
And on their lids a lovely crystal tear,  
Remembering France and her lost sceptre,  
And her first love, passed away like a dream !"<sup>1</sup>

Ronsard appears also to have been at least poetically inclined to Bacchic celebrations. He does not alone sing often the praises of good wine—we have already seen it in the

<sup>1</sup> "Passant d'austre costé, j'alloy voir les Anglois,  
Region opposée au rivage gaulois ;  
Je vy leur grande mer en vagues fluctueuse,  
Je vy leur belle royne honneste et vertueuse ;  
Autour de son palais je vy ces grands milords  
Accorts, beaux et courtois, magnanimes et forts.  
Je les vy reverer Carlin et Catherine,  
Ayant juré la paix, et jetté bien avant  
La querelle ancienne aux vagues et au vent.  
Je vy des Escossois la royne sage et belle,  
Qui de corps et d'esprit ressemble une immortelle ;  
J'approchay de ses yeux, mais bien de deux soleils,  
Deux soleils de beauté qui n'ont point leurs pareils,  
Je les vy larmoyer d'une claire rosée,  
Je vy d'un beau crystal sa paupière arrosée,  
Se souvenant de France et du sceptre laissé  
Et de son premier feu comme un songe passé."

stanzas quoted from *Le Folatrisse Voyage*—but he has some happy lines in *Le Verre* about a glass which his friend Brinon had given him as a new year's gift, and which he values much more than the "most costly chiselled cup, inlaid with ancient medals, whereof the possessor may have his throat cut ; which, when left as an heirloom, may become the cause of many law-suits, or with which, in a drinking bout, one may smash the skull of a friend in a moment of excitement." But "a glass," he sings, "bursts as soon as poison is poured into it . . . and, at night, makes of a porter a king." If wine cannot be come at, Ronsard does not object to beer, for in his verses to Queen Elizabeth he describes England, and says :

" But some day the wandering Ceres . . .  
Will arrive tired on thy shore.  
She, instead of wine, shall brew thee a beverage,  
Not burning, nor heady, nor strong,  
Disturbing the brain, and causing death,  
But innocent for the English country,  
Which by Ceres shall be named beer,  
And may be found so pleasant  
That the neighbours shall come to quaff it."<sup>1</sup>

Another quality of Ronsard appears to have been his always keeping his eye on the main chance. In one of his poems<sup>2</sup> he depicts himself in the royal burial vaults of Saint Denis, and looks at the tombs of those kings "who formerly made all France tremble," but of the many who are lying there, "scarcely two or three shall live after their deaths, be-

<sup>1</sup> " Mais quelque jour Cerès la vagabonde . . .  
Doit arriver lassée à ton rivage,  
Qui pour du vin te doit faire un breuvage  
Non corrosif ni violent ni fort,  
Trouble-cerveau ministre de la mort,  
Mais innocent à la province Angloise,  
Et de Cerès sera nommée cervoise,  
Qui se pourra si gracieux trouver,  
Que tes voisins s'en voudront abreuver."

<sup>2</sup> *Le Bocage Royal*, "à la Reine Cathérine de Medicis."

cause these have never been mean towards good authors, and have made them rich." And another time<sup>1</sup> he complains to a friend that though "he has written the most of all Frenchmen ; though he has placed the French king in the heavens ; though there is no great nobleman in France in whose honour he has not sung again and again, and though his works honour France, he has received nothing for his reward."

It would be wearisome to pass from Ronsard to any detailed notice of his friends and disciples, who shared in his popularity rather by virtue of their nominal connection with him than from their own intrinsic merits. If it is worth while in this age to re-vindicate the claims of the *Pléiade*, the duty is discharged as soon as we have admitted the talent of its leading spirit. Little more is due to that polished sybarite and licentious epigrammatist, the abbé of Notre Dame de Reclus, Mellin de Saint-Gelais. He was a persistent reviler of Ronsard and his school, and clung to the traditions of Marot ; but, unlike Marot, he is readable only when he is impure, and exacts the mention of his name simply through the attitude which he maintained towards his greater contemporary. Even if his preference of the style of Marot proves that he had at least a poetic instinct, still the fact remains that he was not a poet. It is true that he was the court poet ; corresponding in some respect to the poet-laureates of England ; but the least readable of all his verses are those in which he celebrates the marriage or the birth of a prince,<sup>2</sup> or strives to crown with dignity a muse who was nothing if not salacious. It is a circumstance equally creditable both to poet and to poetaster that they became reconciled before their death. To whom we ought to attribute the lion's share of credit may be considered doubtful, when it is under-

<sup>1</sup> *Elégie au Sieur l'Huillier.*

<sup>2</sup> Of such a nature seem to have been some of the duties expected from him as librarian to the king. It is odd that he thought to cast ridicule on Ronsard by styling him "*poète des rois.*"



stood that the basis of the new pact was a profession of admiration on the part of Saint-Gelais for his rival's genius.<sup>1</sup>

It was natural that Ronsard should have many imitators, both during his lifetime and in the age immediately succeeding his death; and these not always servile in their imitation, but men of more or less capacity and inventive talent. Ronsard, like the innovators in every literary epoch—like Wordsworth, Tennyson, Swinburne, to take late and familiar instances—whether we regard him as the source of the novel process and culture, or merely as the first and greatest representative of a style which it was inevitable that his age should have produced, became at once the centre of a numerous school of poets, who all thought and wrote in his own style.<sup>2</sup> We shall frequently have cause to remark on the permanence of the effect produced on French poetry by the Pléiade, even, as already indicated, in the case of those who refused to acknowledge the debt which they owed to it. But in Ronsard's lifetime there was no disinclination to be counted amongst the number of his disciples. One of the best of them was du Bartas,<sup>3</sup> a native of Auch, in Gascony, who exaggerated all the most pedantic qualities of his model, and wrote, amongst other works, a poem which deserves to be called the phrase-book of the neo-classical school. This was the *Semaine, ou Création du Monde*,<sup>4</sup> the marriage-register of science and verse,

<sup>1</sup> Ronsard commemorated the pact in the following lines :—

" Lance monstre, ce monstre d'ire,	Dressons à notre amitié neuve
Contre toi m'a forcé d'écrire,	Un autel ! J'atteste le fleuve
Et m'élança tout irrité,	Qui des parjures n'a pitié,
Quand d'un vers enfiellé d'iambes	Que ni l'oubli, ni le temps même,
Je vomissais les aigres flambes	Ni faux rapport, ni la mort blême
De mon courage dépité.	Ne dénoueront notre amitié."

<sup>2</sup> Tennyson, in "The Flower," aptly, and with some little scorn, expresses the same familiar idea :

All can raise the flower now,  
For all have got the seed.

<sup>3</sup> 1544-1590.

<sup>4</sup> Du Bartas' works have been translated by Joshua Sylvester (1563-1618), under the title of *The Divine Weeks and Works*, and obtained for the latter

written by a Gascon Moses, who, to the minuteness of a Walt Whitman and the unction of a parish-clerk added an occasional dignity superior to anything attained by the abortive epic of his master.<sup>1</sup> Judge of what he was capable, in the first respect, by a brace of untranslatable couplets :

“ Apollon porte-jour, Herme guide-navire  
    Mercure échelle-ciel, invente-art, aime-lyre.”

And again :

“ La guerre vient après, casse-bis, casse-mœurs,  
    Rase-forts, verse-sang, brûle-bois, aime-pleurs.”

Another of du Bartas' inventions was the redoubling of syllables, as, for example, “ le feu *pé*-pétillant,” “ la peur à qui *ba*-bat incessamment le flanc ; ” and worst of all

“ La gentile alouette avec son tire-lire,  
    Tire lire aux fâchés, et d'une tire, tire  
    Vers le pôle brillant.”<sup>2</sup>

A *Gradus ad Parnassum*, in verse, has one great defect : no schoolboy can make use of it without incurring the blame of plagiarism. If it was not for Ronsard to write an epic, neither was the glory reserved for any one of his immediate followers ; though more than one attempted it. France is still waiting for her grand epopeia !

the epithet of the Silver-tongued. This translation was an early favourite of Milton's. Spenser says also of him

“ And after thee (du Bellay) 'gins Bartas hie to raise  
    His heavenly Muse, th' Almighty to adore.  
    Live, happy spirits ! th' honour of your name,  
    And fill the world with never-dying fame ! ”

<sup>1</sup> *La Franciade*.

<sup>2</sup> Dryden, in the Epistle Dedicatory to *The Spanish Friar*, says, “ I remember, when I was a boy, I thought inimitable Spenser a mean poet, in comparison of Sylvester's ‘ Dubartas,’ and was wrapt into an ecstasy when I read these lines :

‘ Now, when the winter's keener breath began  
    To crystalize the Baltic ocean ;  
    To glaze the lakes, to bridle up the floods,  
    And periwig with snow (wool) the bald-pate woods.’

I am much deceived if this be not abominable fustian.”



## CHAPTER III.

## § 1. THE REFORM OF THE LANGUAGE.

THE anecdote will bear repetition, how, when Henry of Navarre asked Cardinal Duperron why he no longer wrote verses, the latter replied that no one ought to meddle with poetry after a certain gentleman of Normandy, M. de Malherbe. The Cardinal's opinion might not be thought very valuable if it were opposed to that of other contemporary and later critics; but the fact is that it was fully confirmed by men as well entitled to a hearing as Boileau, whose admiration for Malherbe was hardly less warm than that of Ronsard for himself. Posterity has been more unkind to the founder of the *Pléiade* than to his successor; but if it has been something less than just towards Ronsard, it has also modified the exaggeration of Boileau's judgment, and done much to determine the exact place which Malherbe ought to occupy in the annals of French literature. We can judge the poets of the Renaissance calmly after the lapse of three centuries; and it is impossible to come to any other conclusion than that Ronsard was in reality the apostle of the school to which Malherbe belonged; that Malherbe's contempt for his predecessors was not well founded; that Malherbe himself was hardly superior in dignity to du Bartas, and not greatly superior in purity of language to Ronsard; that, in justice, we ought not to stop at Malherbe in our efforts to get back to the sources of the new vigour and elegance imported into the French poetic style towards the close of the sixteenth century, but

that we ought at least to give Ronsard his due for the great services which he rendered to his fellow-countrymen. The fact nevertheless remains that the first of the two was a veritable reformer of the French tongue ; that he was looked up to both by his contemporaries and his successors as the greatest authority of the Renaissance in respect of style and diction ; that he was not merely a self-constituted lawgiver in matters of linguistic propriety, but also a scrupulous, exact, argumentative, and scientific linguist. He was a Norman, with all the Norman's sense of superiority to the South, who made it his boast that he intended to *dégasconner* the Court and the pulpit ; and he was credited with the ability to do what he undertook. It was more by his personal influence, by his living example, that Malherbe succeeded in fulfilling this mission. His fame as a poet rests on a thin volume of verses, of no great dignity or loftiness of aim ; consisting, indeed, for the most part of odes to the royal family, and to the more influential of the courtiers. One cannot but feel tempted to doubt the reality of Malherbe's influence on the language of his country, and to refuse him the post of honour which Frenchmen have assigned to him. Yet when we come to read his choicest morsels, to study and appreciate the secret of his charm and the subtlety of his beauty, we are obliged to confess that the French language contained nothing before him more genuinely polished and sublime.

Malherbe<sup>1</sup> was in his thirtieth year when Ronsard died. He had already become known as an acute, if somewhat caustic and acrimonious critic. He openly laughed at the *Pléiade*, and professed a supreme contempt for their stilted and pretentious works ; and to the day of his death he could never restrain a sarcasm at their expense, even when he found himself in the presence of one of the oldest and best of the school. Desportes,<sup>2</sup> whose muse was at least elegant, har-

<sup>1</sup> 1555-1628.

<sup>2</sup> 1546-1606.

monious, and simple, was one day entertaining the critic at dinner. With the eagerness of an author he rose from the table for the purpose of presenting his guest with a copy of his *Psalms*. "Never mind, never mind," said Malherbe, "your soup is better than your Psalms." The younger poet was not justified in so thoroughly repudiating the school from which he undoubtedly learned many lessons and adopted many traditions. His attachment to the classical mythology of Greece and Rome was hardly less close than that of Ronsard. He can rarely avoid a comparison between the subjects of his personal odes and a more or less obscure character borrowed from the ancients. Even in the metrical form of his verses he is largely indebted to Ronsard, and especially so in the twelve-syllable lines which have since become a characteristic of French poetry. In the painstaking elaboration of his poems, in the conscientious labour by day and by night, he was undoubtedly a disciple of his predecessor, or rather of the clear-sighted Joachim du Bellay, whose *Défense et Illustration* was one of those happy predictions which tend inevitably to fulfil themselves. Never was a poet more stolidly deliberate than Malherbe; though it may be doubted whether his best verses were those which cost him the longest thought. It was certainly not so with an ode which cost him a year's labour, addressed to the President of Verdun, intended to console the latter for the loss of his wife, but which reached its destination only after the afflicted husband had sought an alleviation of his grief in a second marriage.

The criticisms of Malherbe are by no means lost to posterity. His friend Racan and his enemy Regnier have transmitted much that gives us a fair insight into the method and the spirit of the man, to whom a dispute on a question of grammar was scarcely less attractive than a poetical conception. But a still more interesting monument of his critical powers exists in an old volume of Desportes, printed in 1600,

and copiously annotated by Malherbe in 1606. The poet had been stung by the satires of Regnier, and by the sarcasms of the friends of Desportes, and he exclaimed : " If I set myself to work I will make of their faults a bigger book even than their own ! " He fulfilled his threat, and the volume, which passed into the hands of Guez de Balzac, and bears his attestation, is preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris—one of the most curious literary documents in the French language.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting not simply as the record of a hotly-contested literary struggle, but more specially because it affords a measure and example of Malherbe's critical acumen, and shows us by what means, and with what degree of minuteness, he accomplished his work of reformation. In some respects his task was rudimentary enough, as where he has to correct the actual bad grammar of Desportes, or to pronounce against identical syllables made to do duty for rhyme. But his fastidious taste went much farther than this, detecting cacophonies in every shape and form, protesting

<sup>1</sup> M. Alphonse Pagès, in his *Grands Ecrivains Français*, has given a detailed illustration of the volume. We may borrow from him the following example of Malherbe's annotations. Desportes has these lines, taken at random :—

“ Oû j'étais attendu d'une puissante armée . . .  
 Ma dame Amour. Fortune, et tous les elemens . . .  
 O songe ! ange divin, sorcier de mes tourmens . . .  
 Et si dedans le feu, tes louanges je chante . . .  
 . . . Mon ceil aussi, larme à larme repand . . .  
 Mais, hélas ! ta faveur de moy s'est departie . . .  
 Et lorsque, par raison, je tache à la domter . . .  
 Que l'unique beauté qui mon ame a ravie . . .  
 De mesme, en mes douleurs, j'avoy pris esperance . . .  
 Si la foy plus certaine en une ame non fainte . . .  
 Vous pourrez bien juger mon amour estre extrême . . .  
 Mais vous, belle tyranne aux Nérons comparable . . .  
 Toujours foible et pesante en terre est arrestée.” . . .

In the margin of each of these lines the purist has written :—“ Du, du—ma, da, ma, mour—geon, je—ge, je, chan—lar, ma, la—la, ta, fa—ta, cha, la—na, ma, ra—mé, men, mes—nen, nu, na—trex, tre—tira, no, né—ten, terrest, tarrest.”



against many barbarous words, not without sufficient justification, and providing a hundred useful hints for a new art of poetry. Be it observed, however, that Malherbe might fare badly enough if his own poems were subjected to the same kind of hypercriticism as he bestowed upon Desportes,<sup>1</sup> and that it is only when we take him at his best that he so far excels the best work of his predecessors.

Let us see Malherbe at his best. He wrote nothing more touching, more finished and harmonious, than certain of the stanzas addressed by way of consolation to M. du Perrier, a Provençal friend who had lost his only daughter. Read two in the original, and say if they are not worthy of a master's hand :—

“ Je sçay de quels appas son enfance estoit pleine,  
Et n'ay pas entrepris,  
Injurieux ami, de soulager ta peine  
Avecque son mépris.

Mais elle estoit du monde, où les plus belles choses  
Ont le pire destin ;  
Et, rose, elle a vécu ce que vivent les roses,  
L'espace d'un matin.”

If we cut out from this copy of verses the inevitable classical illustration, there is nothing in it which does not come genuinely from the heart, yet rounded and polished, without being impaired, as a gem is made more exquisite by the cunning of the lapidary. Malherbe had, in fact, lost a daughter

<sup>1</sup> Thus he blames Desportes for admitting rhymes in the middle of his rhymes. Yet in the very first of his stanzas in honour of the king (1605) he has :—

“ O Dieu, dont les bontez, de nos larmes touchées,  
Ont aux vaines fureurs les armes arrachées.”

And in the same piece we could point out cacophonies as unpleasant as many of those which he has detected in Desportes. For instance :—

“ Par sa fatale main qui vengera nos pertes  
L'Espagne pleurera ses provinces désertes.”

and a son in their youth, and he is able to write of his loss in this strain :—

“ For me, already twice have I been maimed  
By the like fire from heaven,  
And twice has reason fortified my soul  
That I lament no more.

“ Yet it is pain to me, because the tomb  
Owns what I held so dear ;  
But that which knows no remedy should be  
Devoid of idle plaint.

“ Death has his cruel terrors unsurpass’d ;  
In vain we sue for grace,  
The harsh oppressor shuts his ruthless ears,  
And lets his victims sue.

“ The wretch half-shelter’d by his roof of straw  
Is subject to his will ;  
No faithful guard who stands at Louvre’s gates  
Can shield the heads of kings.”<sup>1</sup>

An undercurrent of deep feeling appears to have existed in Malherbe’s character, for when his son was killed in a duel he tried to obtain vengeance on the murderer from the king

<sup>1</sup> “ De moy, déjà deux fois d’une pareille foudre,  
Je me suis veu perclus,  
Et deux fois la raison m’a si bien fait resoudre  
Qu’il ne m’en souvient plus.

“ Non qu’il ne me soit grief que la tombe possède  
Ce qui me fut si cher ;  
Mais en un accident qui n’a point de remède,  
Il n’en faut point chercher.

“ La mort a des rigueurs a nulle autre pareilles ;  
On a beau la prier,  
La cruelle qu’elle est se bouche les oreilles,  
Et nous laisse crier.

“ Le pauvre en sa cabane, où le chaume le couvre,  
Est sujet à ses loix ;  
Et la garde qui veille aux barrières du Louvre  
N’en défend pas nos Rois.”



and the Church, and wished to send a challenge himself. According to some commentators he would have accepted a shameful pecuniary compensation,<sup>1</sup> but he died a few months after his child.

One of the most striking beauties of Malherbe's verse consists of the epigrammatic force with which he every now and then introduces some moral and sententious maxim, which is always apposite, never hard or pedantic. What could be finer than the one already quoted?—

“ Mais elle estoit du monde, où les plus belles choses  
Ont le pire destin.”

Or this, in which he expresses the same feelings as Ronsard in lines which we have already quoted :<sup>2</sup>

“ Je vais bien éprouver qu'un déplaisir extrême  
Est toujours à la fin d'un extrême plaisir.”

Or again :

“ Quant à moy je dispute avant que je m'engage,  
Mais quand je l'ay promis j'aime éternellement.”

We can understand the full satisfaction with which his fellow-countrymen, refined by something like a century of the developed culture of the Renaissance, would read and dwell upon his poems ; we can appreciate the depth of meaning in those three oft-quoted words of Boileau : *Enfin Malherbe vint !*

## § 2. MALHERBE'S OPPONENTS AND FOLLOWERS.

More admirable for his genius than lovable in his personal relations, Malherbe was a bitter and pugnacious enemy

<sup>1</sup> *Poésies de F. Malherbe*, ed. L. Becq de Fouquières, Introduction, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> See the last stanza, page 46.

to all who disputed his judgment or threatened to rival his fame. A modern French critic<sup>1</sup> has not done ill in comparing his literary zeal with the religious zeal of Calvin. The Protestant reformer of religion proscribed ornaments, images, pictures ; all the relaxations whereby the Church sought to fascinate and govern humanity. The Catholic reformer of language, in the same overbearing and ruthless spirit, set his face against the careless, unstudied rhymes and metres of his predecessors, "hating the freethinkers of literature as much as Calvin hated the freethinkers of religion." We have seen how rancorous he could be to men like Ronsard and Desportes. If the question at issue had been the love of God, instead of the cultivation of the Muses, he might have banished them, as Calvin banished Castalion, or burnt them, as Calvin burnt Servetus. As it was, perhaps his cruelty was equally great. It was great enough in the case of Desportes to raise up a redoubtable champion of the latter in the person of his nephew, Mathurin Regnier,<sup>2</sup> a man of intellectual force and genius, not unworthy to be classed with Villon and Marot. He personified the counter-reaction which set in against Malherbe's almost indiscriminate condemnation of the past ; the counter-revolt of the easier, and, let us add, the less robust spirit of the age against Malherbe's fastidious severity. Hear him in an extract from a satire against Malherbe, written to his friend Rapin, one of the authors of the *Satire Ménippée* :—

"However, their knowledge extends only  
To eliminate a word doubtful in their judgment ;  
To take heed lest a *qui* stumbles against a diphthong,  
To spy whether the rhyme be short or long ;  
Or again whether one vowel occurring next to another

<sup>1</sup> Lénient, *La Satire en France au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*.

<sup>2</sup> 1573-1613. Regnier wrote in all 17 *Satires*, 3 *Épîtres*, 5 *Épigrammes*, and several other pieces of poetry, as well as a goodly number of epigrams.

Does not cause the verse to halt to the ear ;  
 And neglect the nobility of the work :  
 No divine stimulus elevates their spirit :  
 They creep meanly, weak of invention,  
 And, wanting in boldness, dare not apply themselves to fiction."<sup>1</sup>

Mathurin Regnier was at his uncle's dinner-table when Malherbe, with more wit than kindness, vaunted the latter's soup above his verses. Perhaps the grain of justice contained in this rude speech stung the nephew more than the outrage done to his uncle's feelings. Perhaps his ardent mind—of which he said himself that "it was in flames day and night, that it only brought forth fire and only breathed love"—set on edge by loose living and a certain habit of licence, produced a natural revulsion against the harshly-exercised authority of the young pedant. At all events,

<sup>1</sup> "Cependant leur sçavoir ne s'étend seulement  
 Qu' à regrater un mot douteux au jugement  
 Prendre garde qu'un *qui* ne heurte une diphtongue,  
 Epier si des vers la rime est brève ou longue,  
 Ou bien si la voyelle à l'autre s'unissant,  
 Ne rend point à l'oreille un vers trop languissant,  
 Et laissent sur le verd le noble de l'ouvrage :  
 Nul eguillon divin n'esleve leur courage,  
 Ils rampent bassement foibles d'inventions,  
 Et n'osent, peu hardis tanter les fictions."

There is spirit and sense here, but perhaps none of the Ronsardists whom Malherbe had so heartily castigated ever wrote ten verses with only a single faultless rhyme. Another of Malherbe's antagonists, not much known for any special virtues peculiar to himself, Courval Sonnet, criticises him in much the same style, and lays himself open to the same strictures as Regnier :—

"Ils disent que Malherbe ampoule trop son style  
 Supplément coutumier d'une veine infertile,  
 Et qu'ayant travaillé deux mois pour un sonnet,  
 Il en demeure quatre à le remettre au net ;  
 Que ses vers ne sont pleins que de paroles vaines,  
 Et de la vanité qui bout dedans ses veines ;  
 Qu'il est plat pour le sens et la conception,  
 Et pour le faire court, pauvre d'invention."

The weak points of Malherbe were plainly stereotyped in the language of his opponents.

Regnier forthwith began to attack Malherbe with all the bitterness of which his satirical mood was capable, and never let him rest again. We have seen how Regnier could sting his adversary ; we have seen how rancorous Malherbe could become. And yet it cannot but strike us as a pitiable mistake, born of the insane literary jealousies and hatreds which too faithfully copied the religious animosities of the century, that genuine poets such as Malherbe and Regnier were should have found themselves thus pitted against each other. Let us accept the acute literary judgment of M. Lénient upon this episode of the classical Renaissance, expressed as it is with a force and point which it would be difficult to surpass :—<sup>1</sup>

“The wars of poets, like civil and religious wars, have at times remarkable issues. Who, for instance, would have expected that the learned and pedantic Muse of the Pléiade would have for its last champion Regnier, descendant of Marot and Rabelais ? And it was he, the reckless roysterer, the railing rhymster, who day after day, in questionable company, squandered his wit, his health, and his money, who was to be charged with the defence of the common heritage of the ancients, of Pindar, Tasso, Virgil, Ronsard, and the rest. And against whom ? Against Malherbe, against the most sober, circumspect, sedate spirit that ever breathed amongst the poets. Faithful to his old Greek, Latin, French, Italian masters, Regnier undertook to avenge them on the hypercriticism of these disdainful modern writers.” <sup>2</sup>

Of course Malherbe, the purist in language, the oracle of good sense, who was to be for two centuries the model of French poets, who, in particular, fathered the modern ode in

<sup>1</sup> *La Satire en France au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, p. 559.

<sup>2</sup> We give Regnier's epitaph, written by himself :—

“ J'ai vescu sans nul pensement,	Et ne sçaurois dire pourqoy
Me laissant aller doucement	La mort daigna penser à moy
A la bonne loy naturelle,	Qui n'ay daigné penser en ella.”



as true a sense as that in which Horace created the Latin alcaic and sapphic metre, was not without his school in his own lifetime. He lived long enough to see his teaching bear fruit, and to find his principles insisted on by as many disciples as those who had followed in the steps of Ronsard. Perhaps the strongest and most worthy of them all was Racan,<sup>1</sup> whom the poet-grammarian found to be a pupil after his own heart, and who has left us a short biography of his master.<sup>2</sup> Racan was indeed the Boswell of a French Johnson, who danced attendance on the old pedant as he sat at his meals, and who thankfully picked up the crumbs which fell from the lips of the literary giant. A hundred anecdotes and speeches might be culled from the pages of Racan's *Life of Malherbe*, which would compare very favourably with the ingenious effusiveness of the gossip Scotchman. Take a single utterance of Malherbe, which has the true ring of the Boswellian Johnson :—

“ Sir, be assured that, if our verses live after us, all the glory for which we can hope is that they shall call us two excellent arrangers of syllables ; that we had a great power over words, for the placing of them fitly, each in its order, and that we were both great asses to spend the best part of our lives in an exercise so little serviceable to the public and to ourselves.”

Racan was a man of small fortune, or rather, like his Scotch counterpart, a man of good birth and better expectations, who cultivated the Muses as an elegant occupation, and through a sincere and imitative admiration of his chosen guide and friend. Malherbe tyrannised over him ; rated and bullied him ; would not let him marry, that he might keep him continually at his side. The scholar—for that was the word

<sup>1</sup> 1589-1670.

<sup>2</sup> Another, less interesting because less unreservedly appreciative, is extant from the hand of Tallemant des Réaux.

which Malherbe delighted to apply to all who called him friend—was not, however, far behind his master in the talent which he displayed for correct and polished versification. He did not indeed merit the eulogies which his immediate successors heaped upon him.<sup>1</sup> Even Malherbe used to call his favourite pupil “a heretic in verse;” and he was too much of a dilettante to succeed thoroughly in a task which required great and well-sustained efforts. His best work was *Les Bergeries*, a sort of pastoral dialogue, in which the poet vainly attempted to harmonise the classical severity to which he had been trained with the natural freedom which the choice of such a subject seemed to promise. There are some fine passages in this work; especially those which strike the chord of Racan’s genuine love of rural life and retirement.<sup>2</sup> But, on the whole, *Les Bergeries* is commonplace and mawkish, with little elevation and abundance of platitude. This, a few stiff

<sup>1</sup> Boileau wrote :—

“ Sur un ton si hardi, sans être téméraire  
Racan pourroit chanter à défaut d’un Homère.”

And La Fontaine :—

“ Malherbe avec Racan parmi le choeur des anges,  
Là-haut de l’Eternel célébrant les louanges  
Ont emporté leur lyre.”

<sup>2</sup> The following stanzas are perhaps the best that could be selected :—

“ Roi de ses passions, il (l’homme) a ce qu’il desire,  
Son fertile domaine est son petit empire;  
Sa cabane est son Louvre et son Fontainebleau.  
Ses champs et ses jardins sont autant de provinces;  
Et sans porter envie à la pompe des princes  
Se contente chez lui de les voir en tableau. . . .

“ S’il ne possède point ces maisons magnifiques,  
Ces tours, ces chapiteaux, ces superbes portiques,  
Où la magnificence étale ses attraits,  
Il jouit des beautés qu’ont les saisons nouvelles,  
Il voit de la verdure et des fleurs naturelles,  
Qu’en ces riches lambris on ne voit qu’en portrait.”

The antithesis at least is fine; and the rest, if said elsewhere and better, is more than respectable.



odes, and a lamentable version of the *Psalms* of David, "accommodated to the present time," of which the less said the better, constitute the foundation of Racan's fame.

Another of Malherbe's disciples was François Maynard,<sup>1</sup> president of the district of Aurillac; of whom the master of the school, whose judgment of his friends, as of his enemies, became stereotyped as soon as it was uttered, said that he was the best maker of verses, but that he lacked power. The condemnation was a grave one, but it was deserved; and the sense of his powerlessness was an ever-present burden on the mind of the mediocre poet. What but a sensible want of power could have dictated this verse to a man as his own epitaph?—

"Repelled by the great and by fate,  
Wearied with expectation and complaining,  
Here I await death,  
Without wishing for it or fearing it."<sup>2</sup>

Poor, sighing in the provinces for fame and for wealth, without the energy or the ability to conquer his adversity, and without the contentment to be happy where his lot had cast him—what could we wish better for such a man than that he had never been able to write a verse which Malherbe could have praised? As it is, almost every one of his verses is charged with a wearisome complaint, until the monotony becomes so great that we can neither admire the poetry nor pity the grumbler.

Racan's *Les Bergeries* were dedicated to Honoré d'Urfé.<sup>3</sup> A prose-romancist rather than a poet, an adapter and dramatiser of Italian pastoral stories, d'Urfé was still imbued with

<sup>1</sup> 1582-1646.

<sup>2</sup> "Rebuté des grands et du sort,  
Las d'espérer et de me plaindre,  
C'est ici que j'attends la mort,  
Sans la désirer ni la craindre."

<sup>3</sup> 1568-1625.

much of the spirit of Malherbe, and was a genuine literary reformer ; not merely of the language, but also of the tone and spirit of French literature. In particular, he rehabilitated and made once more popular the old chivalrous traditions of his country. His masterpiece, *l'Astrée*, the work by which he is known and remembered, was a romance first published in 1609, continued in 1616, further extended three years later, and completed from the posthumous papers of the author in 1627. It had a remarkable success ; the new *genre* surprised and delighted its readers ; it was a return to nature which moved the sensibilities of men and women in a manner which can be compared to nothing else than the reception, a hundred and fifty years later, of Rousseau's *Emile* and *Nouvelle Héloïse*. It inspired the pastoral drama of Racan, provided subjects for the brush of Poussin, created, both in France and abroad, a school of hysterical romance which took the hero and heroine of the novel as their model and their *beau idéal*. François de Sales called it the "courtier's breviary ;" Bishop Camus declared that the memory of the author was as sweet to him as a breath of perfume ; Bishop Huet dreaded to reopen the book, lest he should be compelled to read it over again, "as by a kind of enchantment." Boileau extolled it in spite of himself ; La Fontaine boasted that he had read it over and over again. We cannot attempt to describe the plot ; the *longæ ambages* which extend over five successive portions of the romance, eagerly as they were anticipated and devoured by the author's contemporaries, would only weary the reader. The story had a moral which commended itself to all—a moral which, to revert to our comparison, is not unlike that which, in the eighteenth century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau set himself to inculcate.<sup>1</sup> Nor does it seem worth while to cite so much of the original as would illustrate the method by

<sup>1</sup> The full title of the book was :—*l'Astrée, où par plusieurs histoires et sous personnes de bergers et d'autres sont déduits les divers effets de l'honnête amitié.*

which this worthy aim of d'Urfé was accomplished. Rather let us be satisfied with a short specimen of the vivid appreciation of nature's beauty which shines conspicuously in every other page of this pastoral romance. He is but describing his native country, le Forez, which is made the scene of his story ; and yet what might well have been a commonplace list of towns, rivers, and mountains, acquires grace from the loving touches of the writer, whose prose has all the adornment and delicacy of verse :—

“ Not far from the ancient town of Lyons, on the side of the setting sun, there is a district named Forez, which, small as it is, contains that which is very rare throughout the rest of Gaul ; for, the district being divided between plains and mountains, both of these are so fertile, and lie in so temperate a clime, that the soil is capable of all that the labourer can desire. In the heart of the country is the finest part of the plain, surrounded, as by a strong wall, with neighbouring hills, and watered by the river Loire, which, having its source at no great distance, passes almost through the midst, not as yet too swollen and proud, but gentle and peaceful. Several other streams, in various directions, bathe it as they pass with their clear waves, but one of the finest of all is the Lignon, which, wandering in its course as it is uncertain in its origin, goes winding through this plain from the high mountains of Cervières and Chalmazel as far as Feurs, where the Loire receiving it, and depriving it of its own name, carries it as a tribute to the ocean.”

And again :

“ Lignon, fair and pleasant river, on whose banks I have so happily spent my infancy and the most tender portion of my early youth, whatever recompense my pen may have given thee, I confess that I am still greatly indebted to thee for so much pleasure that I have received along thy margin, under the shade of thy leafy trees and in the freshness of thy lovely waters, when the innocence of my life permitted me to rejoice, and to appreciate, in repose, the fortune and felicity which heaven, with a

liberal hand, scattered over this happy country which thou waterest with thy clear and living waves."

With poets such as Malherbe, and prose writers such as Honoré d'Urfé, the French language had attained its majority ; or rather it had added a crowning grace and elegance to the nervous strength with which Calvin had endowed it. The work of the Renaissance was complete ; for though thought and fancy were to embellish French literature with the richest spoils of human genius, the language was hardly capable of further development, and the master-minds of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were to express themselves in terms which the seventeenth century had unmistakably stamped as the classical standard of speech.

## CHAPTER IV.

## § 1. THE THEATRE OF THE RENAISSANCE.

WE have already had occasion to notice how distinctly, about the middle of the sixteenth century, the character and spirit of the Renaissance appeared to change; how, as it were, a second Renaissance was developed out of the first; how the new birth of ideas and fancies, overflowing in the minds of a suddenly emancipated generation, gave place to a later birth of forms and combinations of ideas; how, in short, the Classical Renaissance to some extent replaced and superseded the chaotic medley of ill-regulated conceptions amidst which the century opened. We have seen how the school of Marot yielded before the schools of Ronsard and Malherbe, how the rondeau and the *virelai* and the ballad were discarded in favour of the ode and the epistle. It can hardly surprise us that the development of the drama in France was precisely synchronous with the development of song, and that the Muse of comedy and tragedy walked step by step with the Muse of lyric poetry. So nearly identical are the dates of these two characteristic changes, that the earliest plays of Jodelle, the father of French classic tragedy, were acted for the first time in the very years when Joachim du Bellay printed his *Défense et Illustration*, and Ronsard the first edition of his poems.

It was in 1548 that the Parliament of Paris laid its interdiction on the mysteries and passion-plays. A couple of

years had not passed before the stage was supplied with the first essays of a drama infinitely higher in its aims and its capabilities, and destined to spring with remarkable quickness into popularity and repute. Comparatively feeble as were the tragedies of Jodelle, they created a new dramatic era, and were received with the favour which his countrymen are never slow to manifest towards any new departure in the march of ideas. "The scorn which, in France more than in any other country, to-day has for yesterday, and which to-morrow in its turn will have for to-day," as a French critic<sup>1</sup> has shrewdly observed, turned its back forthwith upon the old moralities, and even upon the *soties* and farces of the past, and welcomed with eagerness the classic imitations of Greek and Latin dramatists. And if imitation was, during more than half-a-century, to do duty for originality, still we must remember that the invention of the previous epoch had rarely extended beyond the domain of allegory, and that the slow discipline of imitation was needed before the classic drama could become fairly accustomed to its modern dress.

No doubt it was to the Pléiade itself, say rather to the spirit evoked by, or at least embodied in, the appeal of Joachim du Bellay, that the inauguration of the classic drama in France was due. Lazare de Baïf,<sup>2</sup> the father of the better-known poet Jean Antoine de Baïf,<sup>3</sup> a natural son, was at the pains of literally translating the *Electra*, *Hecuba*, and *Iphigenia*, whilst his son's great friend, Ronsard himself, translated the *Plutus* of Aristophanes. Etienne Jodelle was, however, the first of the school to compose plays for actual representation; and as he found no theatre nor actors ready to his hand, he obtained from Henry II. the use of the courtyard in the Hôtel de Reims, and played in his own pieces. In this he was assisted by his friends, Remi Belleau, Jean de

<sup>1</sup> M. Saint-Marc Girardin, *Littérature du Moyen-Age* "Du théâtre au commencement du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle," ch. iii. p. 365.   <sup>2</sup> 1490-1547.   <sup>3</sup> 1582-1589.



la Peruse, and others ; the king patronised and subsidised his theatre, and the success of his venture was assured. His first tragedies, *Cléopâtre Captive* and *Didon*, were followed, in 1552, by a comedy *Eugène*, which was even more favourably received ; and the literary giant of the day, Ronsard, crowned the triumph of his young pupil with extravagant praise.<sup>1</sup>

Very different, of course, were the stage and accessories of Jodelle's theatre from the old cathedral porches, or even the *puys* of Adam de la Halle and his friends. The courtyard of a palace was by no means an unpromising place for the representation of plays which aimed at literary merit almost more than dramatic force, and which may have seemed to be appropriately surrounded by the substantial architecture and adornments of a venerable pile of stone. There would be room in the Hôtel de Reims for the erection of a spacious stage, and for all the conveniences requisite to a company of ambitious amateurs, who had royalty and the court amongst their spectators. On three sides of the spacious square the boxes stood ready for their occupants, who from the windows of the various storeys could enjoy the play at their ease, with as much satisfaction to themselves as those who, in the present day, occupy the boxes of the best-appointed theatres. Luxury had made sufficient advance, by the middle of the

<sup>1</sup> Jodelle (1532-1573) was less than twenty years old when he began to write and act. Ronsard wrote of him in this style :—

“ Jodelle, le premier, d'une plainte hardie  
 Françaisement chanta la greeque tragédie,  
 Puis en changeant de ton, chanta devant nos rois  
 La jeune comédie en langage françois,  
 Et si bien les sonna que Sophocle et Ménandre  
 Tant fussent-ils savants, y eussent pu apprendre.”

And again :

“ Et lors Jodelle heureusement sonna  
 D'une voix humble et d'une voix hardie  
 La comédie avec la tragédie,  
 Et d'un ton double, ores bas, ores hault,  
 Remplit premier le françois eschaffault.”

sixteenth century, to enable persons of wealth and rank keenly to appreciate the pleasure of lounging for two or three hours, on a warm summer's day, on soft cushions in the seat of an open window, idly looking on at the exhibition of a well-written, well-acted comedy or tragedy. The art of the Renaissance, too, would be equal to the task of setting-off a court-drama with effect; and no doubt there was more or less painted scenery of a very picturesque kind on the stage. One word, in fact, would express the whole of the great advance made by the theatre within the preceding century: it was an advance in *form*. Stage accessories of every kind, histrionic art, dramatic art, the appearance and the cultivation of the audience—all betokened this characteristic and universal development. Next to the literary style of the plays, nothing would betoken this more strikingly than the figures which could be seen through the mullioned framework of the palace windows. Catherine de Medici had not come to France for nothing; and her influence was nowhere more conspicuous than in the outward bearing of her court. We can imagine what her children must have looked like on occasions of ceremony and pageantry, in their Italianised dress, with their Italianised air and graces. Or, if we cannot imagine it, the satires of Regnier and his contemporaries enable us to form a fairly accurate notion.

## § 2. JODELLE AND HIS FRIENDS.

The theatre of the Renaissance soon looked beyond the court, and beyond the ranks of fashionable society, for its support; but, look where it would, the only possible audience was *one* which demanded and appreciated a classical drama; a drama, that is to say, written in the purified and dignified style which

Ronsard had made indispensable, charged with allusions to Greek and Latin mythology, and choosing its subjects either directly from Greek and Latin history, or else in imitation of ancient classical models. This must at all events have been so during the lifetime of Jodelle and his immediate successors ; and a hundred years later the freest and most sparkling of French farces retained more or less of the classical balance of thought and expression. It may be questioned whether any French comedy or farce of the sixteenth century can be said to show a deliberate effort to escape from the groove into which the drama was brought by the students of Terence and Aristophanes. The *Farce de Pathelin* would have been an impossibility for any dramatic author between the year 1500 and Molière. And certainly no French tragedy, from Jodelle to the present century, could be even so much as attempted on any other than a classical model.

A glance at *Cléopâtre Captive* will suffice to show both its own meagre quality and its conscientious affectation of the form of the regular Greek drama, Pindaric rather than Sophoclean, as might have been expected from a disciple of Ronsard's. It is written in iambic verse, alternately of five and six feet, with an occasional chorus of Alexandrian women, duly separated into strophe, antistrophe, and epode. To begin with, the ghost of Anthony relates the circumstances of his death ; after which Cleopatra<sup>1</sup> tells her confidantes how she has seen the aforesaid ghost ; whereupon the chorus laments the fickleness of fate. Octavian and his friends now discuss the like topic from a similar point of view ; and Octavian expresses a desire to carry off the Egyptian queen ; whereupon the chorus laments the evils of pride. Cleopatra tries in vain to soften Octavian ; when Seleucus, an Egyptian, informs the Roman that his mistress has concealed a large treasure. Cleopatra strikes Seleucus ; whereupon the chorus

<sup>1</sup> The part of Cleopatra was taken by Jodelle.

bewails the vicissitudes of fortune. *Cleopatra* meditates death: the chorus compares the current evils to a bad season. the Queen apostrophises Anthony's ghost as *phantom* *phantom* whereupon the chorus consoles with her *Procure* *Procure* *Procure* Octavian of the death of *Cleopatra*: whereupon the chorus laments, saying:

"O stern mishap! mishap, alas, too stern!"

Thousand times stern, and thousand times too stern!"

This was all; and it was enough. There is not more part—though there is generally more circumstance—in a play of Sophocles or Æschylus; but in the latter the language more than justifies the absence of action from the stage. The same thing can hardly be said for *Joaze*. Yet his success need not surprise us. The boldness and novelty of his endeavour to revive the classical drama naturally excited the enthusiasm of his contemporaries: of scholars and critics as well as of the idlers of the court. Pasquier relates how *Cleopatra* was acted "before King Henry II. at Paris at the Hôtel de Reims, with great applause from the whole company: and again afterwards at the college of Boncourt, where all the windows were lined with a large number of persons of position, and the court was so full of scholars that the gates were choked by them. I speak as one who was present in the same room with the great Turnebus; and the performers were all men of standing." So elated were the actors with their triumph, that, as soon as the first representation was over, they went in a body to Arcueil, and there celebrated the event by some such literary *fête champêtre* as the one which Ronsard commemorates in his *Polatrisine Voyage* to the very same village; at the same time crowning a star with flowers in honour of Thespis.

<sup>1</sup> "O dure, hélas! et trop dure aventure!

Mille fois dure, et mille fois trop dure!

<sup>2</sup> *Recherches sur la France*, vii. ch. 6.



There was less of originality in Jodelle than in Ronsard ; and still less of poetry or dignity of expression. And yet Jodelle, like Ronsard, founded a school, or rather opened up for his successors a new and grand career of literary activity. This is his title to the gratitude of posterity ; he was the first to write what might otherwise have been delayed for another quarter of a century, but what must have been written before many years had elapsed. In this sense he may be named in the same breath with Ronsard, and in this sense only ; although he himself aspired to be rather a rival than a disciple of his master. "One day," he says, "it occurred to me that if a Ronsard excelled a Jodelle in the morning, a Jodelle might excel a Ronsard in the afternoon." For a moment he seemed to vie with the leader of the Pléiade in public estimation ; but the feebleness of his talent found a counterpart in the feebleness of his character ; and he wrecked his chances of a grander success by his own improvidence and impatience. His catastrophe was at once pitiable and ludicrous. He had undertaken to provide a mask for the entertainment of Henry II., on the return of the latter from the expedition during which Calais was regained from the English. Jodelle—who had greatly deteriorated by the effects of dissolute living and slipshod work—represented Jason on board the Argo ;—he forgot his part, and could not extract himself from the difficulty. Presently Orpheus came upon the stage, singing the praises of Henry, and drawing the rocks and trees behind him. But unfortunately the machinists had misread their directions, and in place of *rochers* they had supplied *clochers*. The mask was brought to an end amidst a storm of laughter : the king was annoyed, and Jodelle never recovered the disgrace. He died at the age of forty, the latter half of his life having been virtually barren of literary achievement.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One of his friends wrote of him, with more bitterness than accuracy :

"Jodelle est mort de pauvreté :                    La pauvreté a eu puissance

The matter of Jodelle's comedy, *l'Eugène*, is better than that of his tragedy. It attacks one of the great abuses of the Church, more or less present in every age and under every form of creed, and destined to create a scandal, in France particularly, of the most gigantic proportions; the worldly life and self-indulgence of the wealthy clergy. His hero Eugène is an *abbé commandataire*, a genuine epicurean, enjoying his pleasures with a quiet conscience, and praising God for them very devoutly. He has given a certain Alix, in whom he takes great interest, in marriage to Guillaume, a worthy shopkeeper. Florimond, a gentleman in the neighbourhood, had been for some time endeavouring to relieve Eugène of the charge of Alix. There is the making of a very telling comedy in these three characters; but Jodelle was not equal to the task. He puts their features on the canvas with no small amount of skill; but he can neither group them nor fill in the background. The play ends tamely with a sudden change of opinion on the part of Florimond; or, at least, we are to understand that Eugène buys him off by giving him his sister for a wife; and so everything finishes in the most satisfactory manner.

If there is poverty of invention in the conception of the play, there is a good deal more to be said for individual passages. Take, for instance, the following soliloquy of Guillaume, who is praising the amiability of his wife:—

“Ah, what pleasanter meeting  
Can there be in the world  
Than that which I have just had  
With this quite perfect woman,  
To whom God has bound me for life  
Ah God! how I desire  
To give thee thanks for ever!

Sur la richesse de la France.  
O Dieu! quel trait de cruauté!  
Le ciel avait mis en Jodelle

Un esprit tout autre qu' humain;  
La France lui nia le pain,  
Tant elle fut mère cruelle.”



And moreover, she is so sweet !  
 She never repels her friends ;  
 She is charitable to all ;  
 She is so amiable to me  
 That every one is astonished.  
 How often has she given me  
 Money to go and gamble !  
 He who will devote himself to God  
 Will never be in need ;  
 Alix always has money ;  
 She is holy here below ;  
 For it is by the grace of God  
 That this money comes to her so.

*Alix (aside, overhearing her husband).* I too am in bliss  
 To possess such a husband as I have.  
 Therefore I shall always be holy.

*Guill.* Even when I go to disport myself,  
 If I stay away three or four days,  
 She says nothing of it on my return,  
 Any more than of a single afternoon ;  
 And when I begin to make my excuse,  
 And to say to her something of this sort :  
 ' I beg you to pardon me, wife ;  
 Really it is a great shame ;  
 To have stayed away till now '—  
 (She says) ' I would that you were still away,  
 My dear, it is good for your health.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> " Ah ! quelle plus douce rencontre  
 En toute la terre se montre  
 Que celle-là qu'ores j'ai faite  
 De cette femme toute parfaite,  
 A qui Dieu m'a joint pour ma vie.  
 Eh ! mon Dieu, que j'ai bonne envie  
 De t'en rendre grâce à jamais !  
 Outre cela, elle est tant douce !  
 Jamais ses amis ne repousse ;  
 Elle est à chacun charitable ;  
 Elle est envers moi tant aimable,  
 Que le monde en est étonné.  
 Quantes fois m'a-t-elle donné

De l'argent pour m'aller jouer !  
 Cil qui veut à Dieu se vouer  
 Ne sera jamais indigent ;  
 Alix a toujours de l'argent ;  
 Elle est sainte dès ce bas lieu ;  
 Car c'est de la grâce de Dieu  
 Que cet argent lui vient ainsi.  
*ALIX (écoutant son mari, et à part).*  
 Je suis en paradis aussi ;  
 D'avoir un mari tel que j'ay.  
 Par ainsi sainte je serai.  
 GUILLAUME.  
 Même quand je me vais ébattre,

This, it must be admitted, is excellent comedy. No doubt the same thing will be done better hereafter, more subtly, and with greater show of probability. But it is not Jodelle's fault that Guillaume is such a blind and helpless dupe. The fine gradations of folly and self-deception, to which we are all of us more or less subject—often the more so the less we believe it—could not be painted with the same brush, or by the same hand, nor could they be appreciated by the same audiences. The audiences of Jodelle might have appreciated something considerably finer, if Jodelle could have given it to them ; but we question if they were ready for the dry satire of Molière—still less for the acute innuendo of the present day. The public needs educating, step by step, and cannot be enlightened by a sudden flash. Jodelle was a genuine educator, and he prepared the soil for Corneille, Racine, and Molière himself.

Take another trait of this first dramatist of the Renaissance, the self-complacent apology of the abbé Eugène :—

“ In all this fair spacious circle of a world,  
 Hemmed in by the skies,  
 None so well preserves  
 This luck within himself as I . . .  
 Fortune bestows on me sufficient happiness  
 To delight me in this world . . .  
 Without labour, good things in abundance  
 Are brought within my house . . .  
 Kings are subject to anxiety  
 About the government of their lands ;  
 The nobles are subject to war . . .  
 The trader is the slave of danger  
 Incurred in foreign countries ;

Si j'y reste trois jours ou quatre,  
 Elle n'en dit rien au retour,  
 Non plus que d'un seul demi-jour.  
 Et quand je me veux excuser,  
 Et de tels mots vers elle user :

Pardon, je vous supply, ma femme,  
 Vraiment ce m'est un grand diffame  
 D'avoir demeuré jusqu'à ores ;  
 — Je voudrais qu'y fussiez encore,  
 Mon ami, c'est vostre santé.”

The tiller of the ground painfully  
 Drives his oxen along the plain ;  
 The working-man ceaselessly troubled,  
 Can barely escape from poverty." . . .

But the superior clergy, like the abbé Eugène,

. . . "have no responsibility  
 Save to be well fed and dressed,  
 To be vicars, priors, canons,  
 Abbés, without having so many monks  
 As they have dogs and birds."<sup>1</sup>

Here the irony is doubtless finer ; more subtle than is the case with Villon's monks and canons, keener than the forcible satire of Rabelais ; almost as delicate in its way as anything produced by the succeeding century. What might not Jodelle have done if he had possessed the laborious patience recommended by du Bellay and practised by Ronsard!

Of Jodelle's friends and fellow-labourers there is not much

<sup>1</sup> "En tout ce beau rond spacieux  
 Qui est environné des cieux,  
 Nul ne garde si bien en soi  
 Ce bonheur comme moi en moi . . .  
 Fortune assez d'heur me rassemble  
 Pour me plaire en ce monde ici . . .  
 Sans travail, les biens à foison  
 Sont apportés en ma maison . . .  
 Les rois sont sujets à l'émoy  
 Pour le gouvernement des terres ;  
 Les nobles sont sujets aux guerres . . .  
 Le marchand est serf du danger  
 Qu'on traîne au pays étranger ;  
 Le laboureur avecque peine  
 Presse ses bœufs parmi la plaine ;  
 L'artisan, sans fin molesté,  
 A peine fait sa pauvreté . . .  
 . . . ne sont tenus  
 Qu'être bien nourris et vêtus,  
 Être curés, prieurs, chanoines,  
 Abbés sans avoir tant de moines,  
 Comme on a de chiens et oiseaux."

to be said. Jean de la Péruse,<sup>1</sup> author of a classical medley which he called *Médée*; Jacques de la Taille,<sup>2</sup> who wrote a *Daire*,<sup>3</sup> Charles Toutain, who attached his name to an *Agamemnon*; and Jean Antoine de Baif, who translated Sophocles' *Antigone*, and Terence's *Eunuch*, and imitated Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus*, are nearly all forgotten. Jacques Grévin,<sup>4</sup> a Calvinistic doctor, who died young, was greatly praised by Ronsard at first, but his name was afterwards erased from the master's writings on account of his Protestant opinions. He wrote several comedies, and a tragedy *Jules César*, in which la Harpe found "grand and powerful ideas and the real tone of tragedy." Robert Garnier<sup>5</sup> was perhaps the only one who showed great inventive force, and in his tragedies, imitated from Seneca, Sophocles, and Euripides, he displayed at least the art of keeping up a dialogue, though he is not seldom prolix, harsh, and diffuse. A want of taste appears in all his creations, of which the best is *Bradamante*, a *tragi-comédie*, whereof the plot is borrowed from Ariosto. Listen to a dialogue between Aymon and Beatrix about a projected marriage of their daughter Bradamante.

*Aymon.* The proposed husband pleases me much.

*Beatrix.* And me too.

*Aymon.* I am quite delighted by him.

*Beatrix.* And so am I, upon my word.

*Aymon.* What I value most in so fine an alliance

Is that it will not be necessary to undo the purse-strings.

He asks for nothing.

*Beatrix.* He is too much of a nobleman.

What need has an emperor's son of our wealth?

<sup>1</sup> 1530-1555.

<sup>2</sup> 1542-1562.

<sup>3</sup> In the *Daire* is to be found this line: "Le seul ennuy mes ennuyds désennuye."

<sup>4</sup> 1539-1570. Ronsard said of him—

"Ainsy dans nostre France un seul Gresvin assemble  
La docte médecine et les beaux vers ensemble.

<sup>5</sup> 1545-1601.

*Aymon.* It is, however, a notable advantage for us  
Not to give a halfpenny to her when she'll marry ;  
Above all to-day, when there is no love,  
And when court is only paid to riches ;  
People only wish for money.

*Beatriz.* And what can you do against it ?  
Must you get angry about that ?  
It is the fashion to-day ;

*Aymon.* It is a cursed age.

*Beatriz.* But as the world goes, it is a golden age.  
One has everything, one does everything, for this strange  
metal ;  
One is a good man, one deserves praise ;  
One obtains dignities, offices, situations.  
On the contrary, without it one is not valued.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Aymon.* Le parti me plaît fort.

*Beatriz.* Aussi fait-il à moy.

*Aymon.* J'en suis tout transporté.

*Beatriz.* Si suis-je par ma foy.

*Aymon.* Ce que je prise plus en si belle alliance,  
C'est qu'il ne faudra point debourser de finance.  
Il ne demande rien.

*Beatriz.* Il est trop grand seigneur.  
Qu'a besoin de nos biens le fils d'un empereur ?

*Aymon.* Ce nous est toutefois un notable avantage  
De ne bailler un sou pour elle en mariage,  
Mesmement aujourd'hui qu'il n'y a point d'amour  
Et qu'on ne fait sinon aux richesses la cour.  
On ne veut que l'argent.

*Beatriz.* Et qu'y sçauriez-vous faire ?  
Faut il que pour cela vous (vous) mettiez en colere ?  
C'est le temps aujourd'hui.

*Aymon.* C'est un siècle maudit.

*Beatriz.* Mais c'est un siècle d'or, comme le monde vit.  
On a tout, on fait tout pour ce metal estrange ;  
On est homme de bien, on merite louange,  
On a des dignitez, des charges, des estats ;  
Au contraire, sans luy de nous on ne fait cas.

## § 3. THE CLASSICAL DRAMA.

On the whole, indeed, the classical drama revived by the Pléiade was virtually a failure; it never became widely popular, and scarcely found its way to an audience outside the circles of the Court, and the schools of fashion and of pedantry. But, in the meantime, the taste for the old national drama was not dead in France; and it manifested itself over and over again—no doubt more frequently than existing records might lead us to believe—in spite of the veto of the Parliament. Travelling through the provinces there were numerous companies of players, still clinging, in all probability, to the favourite *soties* and farces of earlier days; and few of these companies were without a poet who could re-handle old materials, and, at a pinch, produce something which might pass for new. In 1584 a company bolder than the rest, ambitious of a wider fame and a more lucrative run, came up to the capital. But, however they might have hoped to evade the terms of the edict of 1548, they were prevented from acting by the effete old corporation of the *Confrères de la Passion*, whose charter had never been annulled, although it was no longer of any value. Sixteen years later another company managed to come to an understanding with the *Confrères*, paying them a royalty for each representation. They installed themselves at the Hôtel d'Argent, near the Grève, and thenceforth Paris had a theatre which might fairly be called popular. In 1629, seven years after the birth of Molière, in the very year of the foundation of the Academy, Louis XIII. gave his authorisation to the *Comédiens ordinaires du Roi*, who established themselves in the Hôtel de Bourgogne. It was in this same year that Corneille produced his first play; the golden age of the French drama had begun.



Nearly eighty years between the début of Jodelle and that of Pierre Corneille,<sup>1</sup> and what intervened? The stage, as we have seen, was never without its occupants; either the Court drama or the provincial drama was being acted without cessation, and yet the spoils of literature are meagre and few. One name only, at most two names, deserve to be mentioned amongst the immediate predecessors of the author of the *Cid*: those of Hardy<sup>2</sup> and Mayret.<sup>3</sup> The first, whom a happy paradox has designated "a Shakespeare without the genius," whom Corneille honoured with unselfish praise, departed not a little from the senile classical fashion of the *Pléiade*, and has at least abundance of action and of characters. His muse is full of life and humour; his audiences were always large and well amused; but he is rather melodramatic than dramatic. Occasionally, as in *La Gigantomachie*, he descends to the most extravagant burlesque, ending in nothing short of a harlequinade. In *Ariadne* he gives us a pure tragedy for four protracted acts, and finishes the play with the marriage of Theseus and his victim. The best of his dramas, at all events in style and composition, is *Panthée*, which is a tragedy to the last, original in its plot, and very fairly executed. As for Mayret, his *Sophonisbe* is a somewhat remarkable play, professedly shaped upon the model sketched out by Aristotle, and pressed upon the poet's acceptance by the pedantic Chapelain.<sup>4</sup> It duly observes the fourfold division into prologue, prothesis, epithesis, and catastrophe, as well as the unities of time and place. The subject is a fine one. Certain passages are undoubtedly readable, but as a whole the play deserves the name which Hardy applied to all his contemporaries: it is an abortion. The French drama was not yet, but the time was ripe for its appearance. And there were dramatic critics in those days, such as Chapelain

<sup>1</sup> 1606-1684.<sup>2</sup> 1560-1631.<sup>3</sup> 1604-1686.<sup>4</sup> 1595-1674.

and Scudéry,<sup>1</sup> who recognised in Corneille, the author of *Mélite*, the dramatist for whom France had been so patiently waiting.

No question is more pertinent with respect to any great dramatist than this: Did he create his audience, or did he find it waiting for him? Of course no man of transcendent genius, who writes what all men are constrained to listen to and applaud, can fail to modify his hearers; and in this sense Pierre Corneille, like Molière and Shakespeare, created an audience for himself. But, on the other hand, it is more true in the case of Corneille than of many other play-writers of consummate ability, that his public was at hand long before the master mind was in a condition to entertain and instruct it. The classical bent had been given to the French character and taste, even before Jodelle erected his stage, with such force and permanence that it was thenceforth impossible for a very long series of years that any literary production should make a deep impression upon the majority of educated Frenchmen unless it was cast in a distinctly classical mould; and this impossibility applied more stringently to the drama—to the polished poetic tragedy in particular—than to any other branch of literature. Tragedy must be purely classical, or it would be abortive. The greatest failures amongst the efforts of Corneille's predecessors were the tragedies—like the worst of Hardy's, for instance—which were least faithful to the lofty classical standard. No matter if the standard were too lofty for the generality of men; no matter if there were a thousand who could read and prate of Aristotle's laws, who could translate and criticise the masterpieces of Pindar, Æschylus, and Plautus, without fairly understanding their own words; the principles of classical taste were at least latent in their minds, and no man could extort their praise unless he could convince their sceptical judgments that the

<sup>1</sup> 1601-1667.

true spirit of Pindar, of Æschylus, and Plautus was in him. In addition to, rather in consequence of, this recurrence to classical ideas and models, the French mind had conceived an ardent attachment to order and uniformity in political ideas ; the nation, and especially the educated nation, had become intensely loyal, intensely averse to individual assertions of independence. Even in religion the Protestants were all but reduced to silence, whilst the novel Jansenist opinions were sternly repressed as fast as they manifested themselves. Realise the world of ideas in which a cultivated Frenchman lived and moved under Louis XIII. ; picture him, moreover, as a man of great and cherished leisure, elegant, fastidious, as much attached to the proprieties as to the pleasures of existence ; and you will form something like a correct idea of the audience before whom Corneille exhibited his best and most successful plays.

I have said that these were the characteristics of the more educated amongst the audiences of Corneille ; and the fact must not be overlooked that it was only the élite of Frenchmen who, early in the seventeenth century, had attained to this point of refinement. At the two extremes we find two classes of the general public to whom our words would scarcely apply, and upon whom the plays of Corneille and Racine were to produce their strongest and most valuable effect. Amongst the lower orders of society there were very many who had as yet had few opportunities of taking in through the eyes and ears what their more fortunate compatriots had acquired through the study of ancient literature, and by the exchange of intellectual ideas and criticism. And amongst the higher orders, it was still true of a considerable proportion that "the authority of the king was often despised ; the parliaments ever ready for revolt ; the great lords undisciplined, violent, quarrelsome, braving the edicts concerning duels, involving in their hazardous revolts the fair ladies

whom they loved.”<sup>1</sup> In some sense, it is true, the age which saw Corneille’s *début* was an age of licence : true, that is, of the classes upon whom education and the neo-classical refinement had not yet exerted its influence. It was for Corneille, in a large degree, to bridge over the gulf ; to amalgamate, as it were, the heterogeneous audience over whom his polished dramas cast their spell. Of such a kind is the privilege to which the great literary creator in every age is born. Himself the product of the better half of his generation, he steps across the dividing line, and raises the other half to his own level.

#### § 4. CORNEILLE.

Pierre Corneille,<sup>2</sup> who is deservedly reckoned with Molière as the creator of French dramatic art, was born at Rouen in the seventh year of the seventeenth century ; and he devoted himself at an early age wholly to the drama. It is true that he has left a few miscellaneous poems, and a translation in verse of the *Office of the Holy Virgin* ; and for six years, from 1653, he renounced the stage, and produced a fine translation in verse of Thomas à Kempis’s *Imitatio Christi*. His religious tendency was manifested throughout his life ; but the best efforts of his literary genius were occupied in the composition of lofty tragedies in a style of great beauty and finish, interspersed now and then by comedies of considerable grace and vigour. His life, of which but little is known, was in harmony with the grandeur and severity of his muse. He lived apart, almost as an ascetic ; it would even seem that he was reserved and sensitive, if not morose by disposition. It is related of him that his first comedy, *Mélite*, was written under the inspiration of his first love, one Mademoiselle Milet, re-

<sup>1</sup> Paul Albert, *La Poésie*.

<sup>2</sup> 1606-1684.



sident in Rouen. Fontenelle, Corneille's nephew, contributes an anecdote apparently relating to the same lady: "Hardy was growing old, and his death would soon cause a wide breach in the theatre, when a slight occurrence, which happened in the house of a citizen in a provincial town, gave him an illustrious successor. A young man took one of his friends to see a lady with whom he was in love; the new comer established himself on the ruins of his introducer. The pleasure which this adventure gave him made him a poet; he wrote a comedy on it: and there we have the great Corneille." Some part of the story may be true; and it seems to be confirmed by certain verses of Corneille's, which are possibly the foundation of the anecdote.<sup>1</sup> But something more even than a first pure love was behind, to produce the author of the *Cid* and of *Cinna*.

*Mélite* corresponds to the story which is told of its origin. Eraste is the lover who suffers from his over-confidence: Tircis is he who, after rallying his friend on his long devotion to one who will not respond to his vows, meets the proud beauty only to become himself the slave of her charms, and, in spite of himself, to supplant Eraste. Hear the latter pleading his cause:—

*Mélite*.—I neither accept love nor give it to any. How should I give what I never had?

*Eraste*.—It is too easy for you; and henceforth, thanks to you, nature displays her injustice to me by changing her course in order to increase my pain.

*Mélite*.—An imaginary pain, and one which seems only to be felt through mockery.

*Eraste*.—A pain which tears my soul and heart.

<sup>1</sup> From his *Excuse à Ariste*:

"J'adorai donc Phylis, et la secrète estime  
Que ce divin esprit faisoit de notre rime  
Me fit devenir poëte aussitôt qu' amoureux."

*Mélite.*—One rarely bears with so calm a countenance a soul and heart in such sorry plight.

*Eraste.*—Your lovely face allays my grief until my countenance borrows its colour from your own.

*Mélite.*—Do better ; to end your ill and your passion, borrow at the same time the coldness of my soul.<sup>1</sup>

Eraste presently rebels, reproaches the cruel fair one, and plots revenge. Tircis has a sister, Cloris, betrothed to Philandre ; and Eraste writes a love-letter to the latter, in the name of *Mélite*. Philandre responds, and the four lovers are at cross purposes. Tircis meditates the death of *Mélite* ; *Mélite* is informed of his design, and swoons away. Eraste hears a distorted account of the effects of his treachery ; he thinks he has killed both *Mélite* and Tircis, and he heroically resolves to rescue them from the clutches of Pluto. He goes mad, in fact ; takes the first man he meets for Charon, and jumps upon his back. Rudely repulsed by this one, he meets another, whom he takes for Minos ; and to him he confesses his crime. But Minos is no other than Philandre ; and thus the whole skein is unravelled. Eraste is pardoned ; recovers his reason, and fares better than he deserves ; for Philandre is rejected by Cloris in favour of the man whom her brother had supplanted with *Mélite*. We have here, it will be seen, farce as well as comedy ; but the comedy is of the right kind.

<sup>1</sup> *M.*—Je ne reçois d'amour et n'en donne à personne.  
Les moyens de donner ce que je n'eus jamais ?

*E.*—Ils vous sont trop aisés ; et par vous désormais  
La nature pour moi montre son injustice  
A pervertir son cours pour croître mon supplice.

*M.*—Supplice imaginaire, et qui sent son moqueur.

*E.*—Supplice qui déchire et mon âme et mon cœur.

*M.*—Il est rare qu'on porte avec si beau visage  
L'âme et le cœur ensemble en si triste équipage.

*E.*—Votre charmant aspect suspendant mes douleurs,  
Mon visage du vôtre emprunte les couleurs.

*M.*—Faites mieux ; pour finir vos maux et votre flamme,  
Empruntez tout d'un temps les froideurs de mon âme.



Indeed, if Corneille had never written a tragedy, he would still have taken high rank as a dramatist.

*Mélite* was succeeded three years later by *Clitandre, or Innocence delivered*, in which the heroine Dorise snatches a hair-pin from her locks and pokes out, with it, the eye of Pymante, who addressed a long monologue to the murderous instrument.<sup>1</sup> This *tragi-comédie* was followed in rapid succession by the *Widow*, which was very successful; by the *Gallery of the Palais*; *The Ladies'-Maid*; *The Place Royale*; *Medea*, a tragedy chiefly imitated from Seneca; the *Comic Illusion*, in which appeared for the first time the *Matamore*, an adaptation of the classical "Miles Gloriosus," and somewhat like Ben Jonson's Captain Bobadil; and finally, in 1636, the *Cid*. The first eight plays were merely tentatives; the *Cid* was a masterpiece; and it was at once hailed with delight by all except a few of the most punctilious critics. It was the complaint of the latter, of Scudéry and Chapelain amongst them, that the play was little better than a melodrama, and that it appeared deliberately to prostitute the noblest talent to a violation of the principal canons of classical art. From their classical point of view the critics were right. Corneille, living in an essentially classical age, admitted the justice of the rebuke; and, after four years' silence and study, he produced *Horace* and *Cinna*, in the severest classical form. Nevertheless, if the *Cid* had not been written, Corneille would not have been Corneille; and, in particular, he would not have secured his hold upon that more numerous and more difficult audience which it was his lot to train and mould.

The *Cid* was precisely the kind of subject to arrest and fascinate the wilder spirit of the age. The young Spanish hero, the Castilian of twenty, who saved his country from the Moors by prodigies of valour and heroism; who did this without the king's aid, and yet as a perfect knight, *sans peur et* \*

<sup>1</sup> Hence the expression "discourir sur la pointe d'une aiguille."

*sans reproche*, charmed the minds of the restless nobles and of the impressionable citizens who crowded to listen to it ; and neither the cold criticism nor the disparaging commentaries of more refined and affected hearers could damp the ardour of enthusiasm with which the play was greeted. Was it best for the fame of Corneille that he should desert a rôle in which he had proved himself so well calculated to succeed ? Did he, by listening to the critics, and forcing himself more strictly into the classical groove, just miss the chance of becoming the genuine tragic genius whom France has never yet seen, because she cannot divorce tragedy from the conception of a classical model ?

Corneille was indebted for the plot of the *Cid* to the work of a Spanish writer. *The youth of the Cid*, by Guilhen de Castro.<sup>1</sup> From him he borrows the preparations of Rodrigo for his contest against the Moors, the insult and blow given by Count Gomez to Don Diego, in presence of King Ferdinand, the duel and terrible reparation of the insulted man, who returns with his cheek bathed in the blood of his insulter. But the finest portion of the play owes its strength to the episode of Rodrigo's love for Chimène, and to their noble struggle between duty and passion. This is in fact the centre of interest to a French, and perhaps to an English reader. Judge from a brief example whether the charm is a powerful one or not. The lovers just attain the zenith of their bliss, when duty bids them part.

*Rodr.* O miracle of love !

*Chim.* O height of misery !

*Rodr.* What grief and tears will our fathers cost us !

*Chim.* Rodrigo, who could have believed it ?

*Rodr.* Chimène, who would have said it ?

*Chim.* That our joy was so nigh, and so soon lost !

*Rodr.* And that thus close to port, unlikely as it seemed,  
A sudden storm should shipwreck all our hopes !

<sup>1</sup> 1567-1631.

*Chim.* Ah ! fatal griefs !

*Rodr.* Ah ! profitless regrets !<sup>1</sup>

Estimate the dramatist in another style. The most measured and balanced passage in the *Cid* is, perhaps, the long account which Rodrigo gives of the successful ambuscade whereby the Moors had fallen into his hands :—

“ That obscure light which is shed by the stars  
 Showed us some thirty sail advancing with the tide ;  
 Borne on the swelling flood, as by a common force,  
 The Moors and the ocean are carried into port.  
 We let them pass ; all seems to them at rest,  
 No soldiers in the port, none on the city-walls.  
 This silence so profound deceives their minds,  
 They dare no longer doubt that they’ve surprised us ;  
 Fearless they land, cast anchor, disembark,  
 And run to fall into expectant hands.  
 Then up we rose, and all, with one accord,  
 Made heaven resound with our exulting cries . . .  
 They ran to pillage, but they met with war ;  
 At sea, on land, we bore them down before us . . .  
 How many valiant deeds, how many brave exploits  
 Were hidden by the horror of that darkness,  
 Where each, sole witness of his valour’s deeds,  
 Could not perceive whom fortune favoured ! . . .  
 I could not know it till the break of day,  
 But light, at last, showed us our victory ;  
 The Moors behold their loss, and suddenly lose heart,

<sup>1</sup> The original is not so bald

*Rodr.* O miracle d’amour !

*Chim.* O comble de misères !

*Rodr.* Que de maux et de pleurs nous coûteront nos pères !

*Chim.* Rodrigue, qui l’eût cru ?

*Rodr.* Chimène, qui l’eût dit ?

*Chim.* Que notre heur fût si proche, et sitôt se perdît !

*Rodr.* Et que si près du port, contre toute apparence,

Un orage si prompt brisât notre espérance ?

*Chim.* Ah ! mortelles douleurs !

*Rodr.* Ah ! regrets superflus !

And when they see fresh levies come to aid us,  
 Their thirst for conquest yields to fear of death. . . .  
 In the meanwhile, their kings at bay amongst us,  
 And some few of their men, pierced by our swords,  
 Maintain a valiant fight, and dearly sell their lives. . . .  
 Till, seeing their soldiers all fall at their feet,  
 And that it was hopeless to defend themselves,  
 They asked who leader was ; I gave my name ; they yield.<sup>1</sup>

The grandeur of such a passage needs no enhancement by any words of ours. No wonder the play was received with rapture, and that "fine as the *Cid*" passed forthwith amongst the proverbs of literature. Yet, as we have indicated, the opposition manifested against it by the pundits of Parisian

<sup>1</sup> " Cette obscure clarté qui tombe des étoiles  
 Enfin avec le flux nous fit voir trente voiles ;  
 L'onde s'enfle dessous, et, d'un commun effort,  
 Les Maures et la mer montent jusques au port.  
 On les laisse passer ; tout leur paraît tranquille ;  
 Point de soldats au port, point aux murs de la ville.  
 Notre profond silence abusant leurs esprits  
 Ils n'osent plus douter de nous avoir surpris ;  
 Ils abordent sans peur, ils ancrent, ils descendent,  
 Et courent se livrer aux mains qui les attendent,  
 Nous nous levons alors, et, tous en même temps  
 Poussons jusques au ciel mille cris éclatants. . . .  
 Ils couraient au pillage, et rencontrent la guerre ;  
 Nous les pressons sur l'eau, nous les pressons sur terre. . . .  
 Oh ! combien d'actions, combien d'exploits célèbres  
 Furent ensevelis dans l'horreur des ténèbres,  
 Où chacun, seul témoin des grands coups qu'il donnait,  
 Ne pouvait discerner où le sort inclinait . . .  
 Et ne l'ai pu savoir jusques au point du jour.  
 Mais enfin sa clarté montre notre avantage ;  
 Le Maure voit sa perte, et soudain perd courage ;  
 Et voyant un renfort qui nous vient secourir,  
 L'ardeur de vaincre cède à la peur de mourir. . . .  
 Cependant que leurs rois, engagés parmi nous,  
 Et quelque peu des leurs, tout percés de nos coups,  
 Disputent vaillamment, et vendent bien leur vie. . . .  
 Mais, voyant à leurs pieds tomber tous leurs soldats,  
 Et que seuls désormais en vain ils se défendent,  
 Ils demandent le chef ; je me nomme : ils se rendent."



taste and fashion was very strong. Cardinal Richelieu, then at the height of his influence, and having just founded the French Academy, urged this youthful institution to bring its weighty criticism to bear against the audacious and ill-regulated vigour of the successful drama. The opinion of the Academy was drawn up by Chapelain; and it is undoubtedly a weighty sentence. "A piece is only good," says this remarkable document, "when it gives a reasonable contentment—that is, when it satisfies the learned as well as the people. We ought to inquire, not whether the *Cid* has pleased, but whether it ought to have pleased." Whereupon Boileau writes finely:—

"In vain a minister takes part against the *Cid*,  
All Paris looks upon Chimène as Rodrigo does;  
In vain the Academy censures it as a body;  
The public refuses to obey, and obstinately admires it."<sup>1</sup>

In 1639 Corneille produced his tragedy of *Horatius*—the original title, and not *The Horatii*—to prove that he had no need to imitate any one, and, with a vengeance worthy of a great poet, he dedicated this tragedy to Cardinal Richelieu. Though there are faults in it, it is on the whole a masterpiece, and contains some very grand lines. The contrast between Sabine and Camille is well kept up. The picture of old Horatius is really that of a Roman of ancient times, and can only have been conceived by a man who wrote what he felt.

*Cinna*, which appeared a few months after *Horace*, cast in a far severer mould than the *Cid*, is perhaps the best example which we could select of Corneille's classical dramas. The author himself thought it his finest. "As the verses of my

<sup>1</sup> "En vain contre le *Cid* un ministre se ligue  
Tout Paris pour Chimène a les yeux de Rodrigue;  
L'Académie en corps a beau le censurer,  
Le public, révolté, s'obstine à l'admirer."—*Satire IX.*

tragedy of *Horace*," he says,<sup>1</sup> "have something more appropriate and less strained for the expression of thought than those of the *Cid*, so it may be said that the verses of this play are more finished than those of *Horace*, and also that the simplicity of conception in the plot, which is neither overcharged with incidents, nor too much complicated by details of what has passed before the commencement of the piece, is doubtless one cause of the great approbation that it has met with." The criticism is just ; and a brief analysis will tend partly to confirm it.

Cæsar Augustus, Emperor of Rome, is represented by Corneille as characteristically generous, liberal towards his friends and clement towards his foes. To Cinna, the grandson of Pompey, he had been especially liberal ; nor was he otherwise to Æmilia, the daughter of his old tutor Caius Toranius. During the Triumvirate, however, Augustus had proscribed Toranius ; and Æmilia, who attributed the death of her father to the Emperor, nurses a deep feeling of revenge against the latter. This is the focus of the tragic interest ; for Cinna is in love with Æmilia, and is instigated by her to enter into a conspiracy against the life of Augustus. The passages which describe the conflict between Æmilia's love for Cinna and the hatred towards Augustus which causes her to urge him forward in the plot are very fine ; and the poet has known how to exhibit this conflict in a striking manner. The first soliloquy of the heroine artistically presents us with the key-note of the whole play :—

"Ye impatient longings for a signal revenge,  
Whose origin is due to my father's death,  
Headstrong children of my resentment,  
Whom my misguided grief blindly embraces,  
Ye assume too powerful a sway over my soul ;  
Suffer me to breathe for a few moments,

<sup>1</sup> *Examen de Cinna.*



And to consider in the condition in which I am,  
 Both what I venture and what I aim at.  
 When I behold Augustus in the midst of his glory,  
 And when you reproach my sad memory  
 That my father, massacred by his own hand,  
 Was the first step to the throne whereon I see him—  
 When you offer me this bloody picture,  
 The reason of my hatred and the result of his fury,  
 I abandon myself entirely to your burning transports,  
 And believe that, for one death, I owe him a thousand.  
 And yet, amidst a rage so reasonable,  
 I love Cinna still more than I hate Augustus,  
 And I feel this seething agitation grow cool  
 When, to keep pace with it, I must expose my lover.”<sup>1</sup>

Æmilia's misgivings are increased by her confidant Fulvia, who entreats her to pause before she commits herself and her lover to so dangerous an enterprise. “Why,” asks Fulvia, “why need you incur the semblance of ingratitude?”—in answer to Æmilia's plea that her duty to her father's memory absolved her from the claims which Augustus might have

<sup>1</sup> “Impatients désirs d'une illustre vengeance,  
 Dont la mort de mon père a formé la naissance,  
 Enfants impétueux de mon ressentiment,  
 Que ma douleur séduite embrasse aveuglément,  
 Vous prenez sur mon âme un trop puissant empire ;  
 Durant quelques moments souffrez que je respire,  
 Et que je considère, en l'état où je suis,  
 Et ce que je hasarde et ce que je poursuis.  
 Quand je regarde Auguste au milieu de sa gloire,  
 Et que vous reprochez à ma triste mémoire  
 Que par sa propre main mon père massacré  
 Du trône où je le vois fait le premier degré ;  
 Quand vous me présentez cette sanglante image  
 La cause de ma haine et l'effet de sa rage,  
 Je me abandonne toute à vos ardens transports,  
 Et pour une mort, lui dois mille morts,  
 Au milieu pourtant d'une fureur si juste,  
 Je me souviens plus d'un que je ne hais Auguste,  
 Et de ce mouvement de brûlant mouvement  
 Quand il faut pour le suivre exposer mon amant.”

established over her by his marked and constant favours. "Can you not hate without your hate breaking bounds? Plenty of others, beside yourself, have not forgotten by what cruelties his throne was strengthened." "What!" cries Æmilia, "shall I hate him without seeking to injure him?" It is not in her nature. She, a weak woman, the favourite of the Emperor, even to the eclipse of Livia, will dare and do though all Rome hold back; if not with her own hand, then by the hand of the man whom love has made her slave. Cinna comes in as the two are talking, eager and sanguine, without any of the hesitation felt by his mistress. "As for me," he exclaims, "let Heaven be stern or propitious to me, raise me to glory, or deliver me over to punishment, let Rome declare for us or against us, if I die to serve thee, all will be pleasant to me." This conversation is interrupted by Evander, the freedman of Cinna, who informs his master that Cæsar has summoned him, and at the same time Maximus, another of the chiefs of the conspiracy. Æmilia exclaims:

"To send for the chiefs of the enterprise!

Both! at the same time! You are discovered!

*Cinna.* Let us hope better, for Heaven's sake.

*Æmilia.* Ah, Cinna! I lose thee."<sup>1</sup>

But Augustus has sent for his friends only to tell them that the power and glory which he had so greatly coveted begin to pall upon him. He invites their sympathy and assistance, insists upon their exercising a greater authority in the State, and is set at rest by their flattery. Maximus, left alone with Cinna, is on the point of relenting; but the firm resolution of Æmilia acts through the spirit of her lover, and

<sup>1</sup> *Emilie.* Mander les chefs de l'entreprise!

Tous deux! en même temps! Vous êtes découverts!

*Cinna.* Espérons mieux, de grâce.

*Emilie.* Ah, Cinna! je te perds!

*Act I. Scene 4.*

Cinna is more determined than ever to carry out the plot. A certain instinctive jealousy between these two men is skillfully insinuated during this scene ; and the third act reveals to us that Maximus also is in love with Æmilia. His freedman Euphorbus, discovering the fact, comes straight to the point with him. "How does my friendship," sighs Maximus, plunge me in extreme wretchedness!" "The remedy," rejoins Euphorbus, "is simple ; act for your own interest. Break the fatal bond of a scheme which is ruining you : gain a mistress by accusing a rival." Maximus is indignant ; then he listens and considers the advice. Meanwhile Cinna's heart begins to fail ; he is plunged in melancholy at the thought of betraying a sovereign who has offered him the half of his kingdom ; and it is now the turn of Maximus adroitly to confirm his resolution. Æmilia, also, perceiving his weakness, taunts and stings him into renewing his promise, and having done so herself for a moment yields—but only for a moment. Euphorbus betrays the conspiracy to the Emperor, who is overwhelmed by the treachery of his friends.

"After I had placed my empire in their hands,  
They plot together to rob me of my life !  
Maximus has seen his error ; he has caused me to be  
warned,  
And displays a heart touched by genuine repentance  
But Cinna !

*Euphorbus.* Cinna alone persists in his fury,  
And rebels all the more against your goodness. " <sup>1</sup>

The cunning freedman goes on to tell Augustus that his

<sup>1</sup> *Aug.* "Après qu'entre leurs mains j'ai remis mon empire,  
Pour m'arracher le jour l'un et l'autre conspire !  
Maxime a vu sa faute, il m'en fait avertir,  
Et montre un coeur touché d'un juste repentir ;  
Mais Cinna !

*Euphorbe.* Cinna seul dans sa rage s'obstine,  
Et contre vos bontés d'autant plus se mutine."

*Act IV. Scene 1.*

master has thrown himself into the Tiber. The Emperor sends for Cinna ; and after a grand soliloquy, in which he bitterly resolves to die, but first to "extinguish the torch of life in the blood of the ungrateful one," Augustus has an interview with his mild-minded consort, Livia, who persuades him to pardon the traitors.<sup>1</sup> Maximus, suddenly presenting himself to Æmilia, after the report of his death had reached her, declares his passion ; but he is received with disdain, and even accused of treachery to Cinna, until he too resolves upon death.

In the last act Augustus calmly reproaches Cinna, in a monologue, perhaps, the finest in French tragedy ; the latter braves his sovereign, and demands to be condemned. Whilst they are speaking Livia enters with Æmilia and Fulvia ; and here is a genuine touch of female jealousy. She exclaims—

" You know not yet all his accomplices :

Your Æmilia is one of them, my lord ; behold her ! " <sup>2</sup>

Æmilia takes the blame upon herself ; and Augustus cries—

" O daughter ! is this the reward of my favours ?

*Æm.* My father's produced the like effect in you.

*Aug.* Think with what affection I nourished your youth.

*Æm.* He nourished yours with the same tenderness ;

He was your tutor, and you were his assassin ;

You have shown me the path to crime. " <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Corneille has only sketched Livia in outline. She does not appear until the end of the fourth act, and her part was commonly omitted on the stage—at all events in the later representations of the play.

<sup>2</sup> " Vous ne connaissez pas encor tous les complices ;

Votre Emilie en est, seigneur, et la voici. "

<sup>3</sup> " *Aug.* O ma fille ! est-ce là le prix de mes bienfaits ?

*Em.* Ceux de mon père en vous firent mêmes effets.

*Aug.* Songe avec quel amour j'élevai ta jeunesse

*Em.* Il éleva la vôtre avec même tendresse ;

Il fut votre tuteur, et vous son assassin ;

Et vous m'avez au crime enseigné le chemin. "

*Act V. Scene 2.*

Livia thereupon preaches the doctrine of the inviolability of the life of monarchs, no matter how they have obtained the throne, and no matter what they do or have done. Then Maximus enters, and confesses the part which he has played; the Emperor is again overwhelmed; but the triple blow to his confidence has the effect of softening his heart; and he forgives the conspirators.

Such is *Cinna*; with the *minimum* of action and variety, but with infinite simplicity, strength of delineation, gravity, and eloquence. It is the most strictly classical, and at the same time the most poetical of Corneille's plays; it does not conceal the difficulty which he felt in restricting his Muse to the classical groove, but it displays the power of his genius in overcoming the difficulty. Dryden calls it "the very best of Corneille's," and says: "Had it been possible for Aristotle to have seen the *Cinna*, I am confident he would have altered his opinion, and concluded that a simple change of will might be managed with so much judgment, as to render it the most agreeable, as well as the most surprising part of the whole fable."<sup>1</sup>

*Polyeucte*, represented in 1640, is a Christian tragedy, full of pathetic tenderness and sublime thoughts. The heroine sacrificing even her love to her belief, and Severus, the heroic soldier and the generous rival, will interest the student at all times, though we must admit that as an acting piece it seems rather monotonous. In the two following years he produced *Pompey*, and *The Liar*, a comedy, freely followed from the Spanish. In the first-mentioned tragedy the style is often turgid, though the character of Cornelia is depicted in a masterly manner; the comedy is natural in tone, conversa-

<sup>1</sup> In the epistle dedicatory to *Love Triumphant*, Dryden's last play. He also alludes to Augustus, in *Cinna*, changing his intention of punishing the conspiracy, and endeavours to excuse by it the plot of his own play, where Veramond, king of Arragon, suddenly changes his temper and resolution, and pardons Alphonso, who has given himself voluntarily up to him.



tional, and contains some fine character-sketches ; above all, those of the hero Dorante and his father G ron te. A *Sequel to the Liar*, also imitated from the Spanish, which was brought out a year later, met with little success, and deservedly so ; but Corneille took his revenge with *Rodogune*, of which the fifth act struck terror in the heart of the spectators. Then came *Th odore* (1645), another Christian tragedy, in which a young girl has to choose between being dishonoured or becoming an apostate, and which was wholly unsuccessful. Two years later he gave *H raclius*, and was at last elected a member of the Academy, after having seen twice some insignificant literary man preferred to him. *Don Sancho of Arragon*, a heroic comedy ; *Andromeda*, a grand piece with machinery, which was acted forty-five times, a very wonderful success for these days, and *Nicom des*, followed in succession, but did not add to the fame of their author. *Pertharite*, acted in 1653, was a complete failure, and in his preface to that tragedy Corneille declared openly that he abandoned the stage, and that " he perceived he had become too old "—he was forty-seven years of age—" to be still the fashion." But, listening to the advice of Fouquet, he produced again, six years afterwards, * dipus*, a wretched tragedy, though it met with some success ; and then, following one another, the *Golden Fleece* ; *Sertorius*, in which the hero is well delineated ; *Sophonisba* ; *Otho*, in which Galba and Otho are energetically depicted after Tacitus ; *Agesilaus* ; *Attila* ; *Titus and Berenice*, a subject which Racine also treated ; *Psyche*, a comedy-ballet, in collaboration with Moli re and Quinault ; *Pulcheria* ; and finally, after a dramatic career of forty-five years, and after having produced thirty-two plays, his last tragedy, *Surena* (1675). Let us give the final lines of this play. Surena has been murdered, and his sister Palmis addresses the following words to Eurydice, a Parthian princess, who has been loved by her brother :—

" And you, Madam, whose useless love,  
 And intrepid pride appears yet tranquil,  
 You who, full of affection for him, without determining  
     anything,  
 Have only loved him to assassinate him,  
 Go, and look at the ending of such a love,  
 Go and gather the fruit of it, and enjoy its advantages.  
 What! You are the cause of his loss, and you do not weep.  
*Eurydice (stabs herself).* No, I do not weep, madam ; but  
     I die." <sup>1</sup>

With this sublime saying this great poet closes his poetic struggle, and leaves his fame to the judgment of posterity.

In order to arrive at a just idea of the theatre of Corneille one ought to read also his *Prefaces*, and his three discourses *On the Utility and the Facts of Dramatic Poetry*, *On Tragedy*, and *On the Three Unities*, in which the depth of his studies, as well as his theories, are fully developed.

It is melancholy to have to state that the last days of Corneille were saddened by domestic troubles, by penury nobly borne, and above all by a painful consciousness of the decline of his genius, the greatest burden which God can lay upon the already overtasked brain of an aged literary man, of whom the eminent ones appear doomed in all countries to be more or less admired by posterity, and more or less attacked by contemporaries ; whose common lot it seems to be to have monuments erected after their death with the very stones which they received when they asked for bread.

<sup>1</sup> *Palmis.* " Et vous, madame, et vous, dont l'amour inutile,  
 Dont l'intrépide orgueil paraît encor tranquille,  
 Vous qui, brûlant pour lui, sans vous déterminer,  
 Ne l'avez tant aimé que pour l'assassiner,  
 Allez d'un tel amour, allez voir tout l'ouvrage,  
 En recueillir le fruit, en goûter l'avantage.  
 Quoi ! vous causez sa perte et n'avez point de pleurs ?  
*Eurydice.* Non, je ne pleure point, madame ; mais je meurs.

Nearly all students of literature, of every nation, have agreed in extolling Corneille as the greatest classical poet of France, and it may seem superfluous in me to add even the smallest tribute to the perennial eulogies bestowed upon him. But when a nation erects a statue in honour of one of its great intellects, no contribution, however small, is disdained. Every worker in the fields of *belles-lettres* has thus a right to bestow his obolus of honest admiration upon the poet who has sung of noble deeds in noble language.

When we have read one of the best tragedies of Corneille—and I admit at once that they are very unequal—we rise from its perusal better than we were before, with an intense reverence for these more than human heroes or heroines whose adventures we have followed. They are superhumanly brave, generous, lofty in words and action, and the atmosphere they move in becomes purer and better, because they dwell there. They have no mortal weaknesses, or if they show them it is on a much grander scale than ordinary human beings; their virtues are enhanced by the vices and follies of the tyrants, the wicked and sometimes ridiculous personages who serve as their foil. All the characters, indeed, are so completely concrete in their actions, so monotonously virtuous or vicious, so argumentative, that they seem not to possess many passions, but only one; and whether as fathers or lovers, friends or enemies, tyrants or champions, we admire them, respect them, but admit that they sometimes weary us. And this is not to be wondered at; for we are accustomed to meet in the circle in which we move complex men and women, gifted with many virtues, having not a few vices, and animated by various passions, of which one may now and then predominate, but which generally work harmoniously together, and do not obtrude themselves offensively. Shakspeare is perhaps the best delineator of humanity, considered from this point of view. But Corneille's characters

are ever grandiloquent, move always on stilts, are often too refined, and not seldom over-emphatic in the expression of their love or hatred. Hence we feel constrained when in their company ; they are wanting in something ; they are too completely good, bad, or heroic, they are quite different from us ; they are perhaps too much above us. What are our petty moving springs, our huckstering ambition, in comparison with their motives ? Their principles are not ours, their very language differs, their noble actions tacitly reprove our daily mode of living. It is all very well to sneer at such tragedies, to say that it would be very uncomfortable to live with such eminently virtuous and dignified men ; but granted all this, and yet the fact remains that we feel all the better and more moral after the perusal of Corneille. We rise with a momentary desire to imitate, if possible, such pure ideals. We go on with our everyday life, mayhap not much the better, yet certainly not much the worse, after reading one of Corneille's tragedies ; thanking God in our innermost heart, if we have any manliness left in us, that there were men in this world who created such genuine and high-minded characters, which have no prototypes in real life, but are grand exemplars for many ages, to be respectfully admired as long as there exist people wise enough to reverence imaginative and unapproachable creations. Men, as a general rule, love variety and emotion ; but if it be the highest aim of poetry to ennoble and strengthen the mind, and not to deprave or torture it, then Corneille is one of the few grand poets with which this world has been blessed.

Thomas Corneille,<sup>1</sup> his brother, who was nineteen years younger than Pierre, was also a laborious dramatist, but is a proof that the old Latin saying, *Labor vincit omnia*, is not always true, for though he laboured hard, he could not overcome his want of talent. He married the sister of his bro-

<sup>1</sup> 1625-1709.

ther's wife, lived with his brother, and wrote the same number of dramatic pieces ; yet only his *Count of Essex*, and perhaps the *Festin de Pierre*—which he versified after Molière's *Don Juan*—are known to posterity. He was an excellent brother, but not at all a first-rate dramatist.



## CHAPTER V.

## § 1. A SATIRIST OF THE LATER RENAISSANCE.

IN an age endowed with literary activity, when creations abound and ideas overflow the narrow limits of human existence, it must always happen that certain individuals who have lived all their lives in the midst of the great current of intellectual history, dying at last in a ripe old age, appear to have belonged especially to more than one generation, and to lay claim to a share in more than one distant epoch. Such a man was Etienne Pasquier,<sup>1</sup> whose lifetime corresponded at one point or another with the prime of such historians as Calvin, de Beza, Agrippa d'Aubigné, de l'Hôpital, Montluc, de Lanoue, and Brantôme. We have made acquaintance also with many of the historians and pamphleteers who entered most deeply into the religious controversies of the sixteenth century, contributing to the history or giving expression to the bitterness of the League and its opponents. Let us now direct our attention to a prominent figure in the literary annals of the later Renaissance—to a man who has been, if not neglected, still appreciated only in a partial and incomplete manner, but who is nevertheless a many-sided and far-reaching literary creator, well worthy of being crowned with a higher and more enduring recognition. A poet, an historian, a writer of letters, a satirist of much power and incisive-

<sup>1</sup> See vol. i. book iii. ch. 3, page 315.

ness, Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné<sup>1</sup> is indispensable to a due understanding of the historical and literary epoch with the spirit whereof his works are so thoroughly imbued. His father, when he was only eleven years old, showed him the remains of some slaughtered Protestants at Amboise, and told him "to act as he had done, and not to be sparing of his life in order to avenge these chiefs so full of honour;" and that if he did not act so a parent's curse should cling to him. A zealous Protestant, a counsellor of state, a soldier; remarkable for high moral and personal courage, for prudence and directness of speech, for consistency and incorruptibility—at all events political incorruptibility—amidst a court so noted for corruption and double dealing as was that of the later Valois, he retained to the end of his life the respect both of friends and of foes—of the former, because they knew him at his best; of the latter, no doubt because they knew him at his worst, as one of the hardest hitters in the warfare of satire, who rarely spared an enemy, and who never struck without wounding. To Henry IV., during the earlier years of his reign, he gave such assistance as the king had received from no other literary ally save the writers of the *Satire Ménippée*. Of the religious wars themselves he wrote as he fought, sternly, with a high sense of duty and a bitter partisanship, as eager and twice as trenchant as that of Montluc and de Lanoue. When the wars were over and the Protestant king was firmly seated on the throne, he could not relax, like most of his contemporaries, but kept his bow ever bent, and his arrow ever drawn to the head. Even before the monarch himself, whom he loved and served, just as he had despised and satirised his predecessors, he would not play the courtier, nor sacrifice his truth and self-respect to his

<sup>1</sup> 1550-1630. He was the grandfather of Madame de Maintenon; the progenitor of a distinguished family, whereof Merle D'Aubigné, in the present century, was a worthy representative.

desire to please. Austere, almost morose, to his king as to the weakest of his friends, he steadily refused to flatter and cringe amidst the crowd of sycophants whom the rising fortunes of the conqueror of Ivry had attracted to his side. The faithful counsellor clung to his master even after his apostasy; perhaps recognising the almost irresistible force of the constraint which made Henry abjure the reformed religion, but at the same time scorning with infinite bitterness the unscrupulous servility of the Protestants who changed their religion like their court dress. Henry himself did not escape the lash of his subject's tongue. When Châtel made his unsuccessful attempt on the king's life, d'Aubigné said to the latter: "God has smitten you on the lip for having denied him with the lip; he will smite you to the heart when you have denied him with the heart." Twenty years after the battle of Ivry, the prophecy was to be fulfilled by the knife of Ravaillac.

His exasperation against the renegades, and against the proselytisers, Duperron,<sup>1</sup> d'Ossat, and their friends, inspired one of the best of his controversial satires, the *Confession of Sancy*. Sancy, the colonel of the Swiss guard, was one of the apostates who chose to identify their faith with that of the king, but the scope of the diatribe is sufficiently wide to include other victims of the same character, with simple compromisers like Sully and Hurault, favourites of the former king like d'Epernon, and of the reigning king, like Bellegarde. The satire, as we now have it, is a composite work, which seems to have accumulated

<sup>1</sup> Duperron was the principal agent in the conversion of Henry IV., and it was he who managed the reconciliation with the Holy See. He was rewarded with a cardinal's hat, which, doubtless, went far towards rendering him callous to the stinging invectives of d'Aubigné, and to such popular lampoons as the Latin doggrel, which began in this fashion—

"Franci vos quotquot estis;  
Audite me si potestis,

Et digito du Perronem  
Istum monstrate lenonem."

during the period from 1599 to 1606, ending with an account of certain miraculous conversions by Mathurine, a fair ally of the Cardinal's. It is indeed something more than a satire, dealing freely with religious dogmas, with grace and good works, with transubstantiation and image-worship, aiming as much at controverting as at scarifying the proselytisers. Sancy has been taken in hand by Duperron, who knew how to make a religious conversion chime in with the temper of a worldling and a courtier; and he has his lesson well by heart. He firmly believes in *grace*—for it is the instinct of his heart to rely upon the grace of the king; in *works*—for “it is by good and laudable works that so many people have earned a place in the paradise of France.” As for *transubstantiation*, the miracle is easy of belief, for is not the country full of examples? “The sweat of a wretched labourer changes into the fat of a prosperous partisan or treasurer. The marrow of the fingers of a Gascon vine-dresser, who rejoices the heart of all, fills the stomach of a parasite. . . . The blood of a soldier, lost in driving d’Epernon from Provence, is turned into hypocras. As for the host of the Rose of Blois, we see him converted in these days into M. de Bussy-Guibert. . . . The taxes of France have transubstantiated the labourer’s fields into grass patches, the vineyards into waste lands, the labourers into beggars, the soldiers into thieves, with little of the miraculous, serfs into gentlemen, servants into masters, masters into servants.”

There was not much reticence or discrimination in the satirical mood of d’Aubigné when once fairly roused; he struck about him, sparing none, and more easily moved to indignation than to pity. Nothing could be more savage than some of his brochures; the fiercest of all, if it is rightly attributed to him, is the *Divorce Satirique*, in which he puts into the mouth of Henry a bitter reproach against his dissolute queen, Marguerite, which prepared the way for an actual



divorce.<sup>1</sup> The king's second wife, Mary de Medici, showed no particular gratitude to her husband's trusted counsellor ; for during the long regency after Henry's death d'Aubigné was an exile from court, and he took his revenge by writing the *Adventures of the Baron de Fœneste*.<sup>2</sup> The hero of this satirical romance is a Gascon courtier, the burlesque type of the hollow and ostentatious court, the *Faux-semblant* of the seventeenth century.

The greatest of d'Aubigné's satires, as great and powerful in its way as the satires of Rabelais, and that on which his fame has chiefly hung, was a poem commenced as early as 1577. So trenchant, indeed, did the author conceive it to be that he abstained from publishing it until he was an old man, when the events out of which it immediately arose had become matters of history, and when the lessons which it taught appeared rather as a natural outcome of a literary essay than as the violent blows of a controversialist. Infinitely superior to Ronsard, the *Tragiques* may yet not unfairly be attributed to Ronsard's school, although the work was to the *Misères du Temps* of the master much what the *Satire Ménippée* was to an average Huguenot diatribe. It was in the *Tragiques* that d'Aubigné exemplified the intensity of his acute literary genius, the bitterness of his consuming hatred for corruption in high places. The spirit of Juvenal, or, better, the spirit of the Hebrew prophets in face of the old-world tyrannies, is matched

<sup>1</sup> Henry IV. was really as dissolute as Marguerite. The *Amours du Grand Alexandre* tell some strange stories about the king and his royal amours.

<sup>2</sup> From the Greek *palæsthai*, to seem. The late M. P. Mérimée, a literary man and a senator, attacking d'Aubigné in his preface to the *Adventures du Baron de Fœneste*, calls him "a grumbler . . . no doubt wanting the necessary qualities for the exercise of authority. . . naturally snappish, quarrelsome and jeering, never being able to keep back a *bon-mot*. . . a biting poet, a dangerous swordsman, a theologian full of quotations ; one did not know how to take him : in beginning with him one could only gain an epigram or a sword stroke, sometimes both. Thus, feared by every one, esteemed by some, he had very few friends, and I do not know if he loved any one." I doubt if d'Aubigné's character could be understood by M. Mérimée.



and surpassed by the overwhelming indignation of this colossal censor of the sixteenth century, to whom the last of the house of Valois was at once the Ahab and the Heliogabalus of unhappy France. Never was the adage, *facit indignatio versum*, better illustrated than in this case ; never were the circumstances and the man more aptly disposed for the evolution of a bitter and brilliant invective. It was whilst he lay on a sick-bed at Castel-Jaloux,<sup>1</sup> slowly recovering from the wounds which he had received in attacking "the enemies of the Lord," that d'Aubigné conceived and began to work out his satire, dictating to his friend, the judge of the district, the first burning couplets which he imagined were to be his last testament of reproach. He had seen "the dying face of the captive Church ;" he had seen the blood and the anguish of his country, and his wrath bursts out in a torrent against those who had imbrued their hands in her blood :—

"O desolate France! O bloodthirsty earth!  
 (Not earth, but ashes!) O mother, if it be the act of a mother  
 To betray her infants by the delights of her bosom,  
 And, when they are murdered, to grasp them with her hand;  
 Thou givest them their life, and beneath thy breast  
 The bloody quarrel of the headstrong brood is excited."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The seat of the Lords d'Albret, where d'Aubigné commanded a small force for several years. It was his friend Jeanne d'Albret who wrote to her son Henry IV., fascinated by the charms of Marguerite de Valois: "Je désire que vous vous retiriez de cette corruption."

<sup>2</sup> "O France désolée, O terre sanguinaire!  
 (Non pas terre mais cendre!) O mère, si c'est mère,  
 Que trahir ses enfants aux douceurs de son sein,  
 Et, quand on les meurtrit, les serrer de sa main:  
 Tu leur donnes la vie, et, dessous ta mamelle,  
 S'émeut des obstinés la sanglante querelle.  
 . . . Vous avez, felons, ensanglanté  
 Le sein qui vous nourrit et qui vous a porté:  
 Or, vivez de venin, sanglante geniture;  
 Je n'ai plus que du sang pour votre nourriture."

*Les Tragiques*, bk. i.; *Misères*.

And the mother herself turns round upon her children :

“Felons, you have steeped in blood  
The bosom which nursed and bore you ;  
Feed then on poison, sanguinary generation ;  
I have nought left but blood wherewith to nourish you.”

A terrible picture of the times is that which d'Aubigné draws, not by implication, but in burning words ; not in mere satire, but with overflowing indignation. He says :—

“Our resting-places are foreign lands ;  
The inland towns are become frontier towns ;  
The village is on its defence, and our very houses  
Are as a rule garrisons and prisons.  
The honest burgher, model of his town,  
Sees his wife and daughter outraged before his eyes,  
And falls under the insolent and merciless hand  
Which, a while ago, was held out to beg for bread. . . .  
The hundred-years old peasant, whose hoary head  
Has become covered with snow as he followed his plough,  
Sees galloping from afar the blustering musketeer,  
Who with rude hand, mad with hunger and rage,  
Plucks out the grey hair which is the old man's pride,  
Because he has found nothing to plunder in the village.”<sup>1</sup>

*Les Tragiques*, as finally completed, is divided into seven books, whereof the first is devoted to a description of the

<sup>1</sup> “Les places de repos sont places étrangères ;  
Les villes du milieu sont les villes frontières :  
Le village se garde, et nos propres maisons  
Nous sont le plus souvent garnisons et prisons.  
L'honorable bourgeois, l'exemple de sa ville,  
Souffre devant ses yeux outrager femme et fille,  
Et tombe, sans merci, sous l'insolente main  
Qui s'étendait naguère à mendier du pain. . . .  
Le paysan de cent ans, dont la tête chenue  
S'est couverte de neige en suivant sa charrue,  
Voit galoper de loin l'argoulet orageux,  
Qui d'une rude main arrache les cheveux,  
L'honneur du vieillard blanc, mû de faim et de rage  
Pour n'avoir pu trouver que piller au village.”

miseries under which France was groaning ; the second, best known and perhaps most exclusively satirical, draws the portraits of the House of Valois, concerning whom the author says " that the steel of his verse shall engrave their history in the presence of the universe." The third book attacks the Parliaments and judges, whose severity was reserved for the adherents of the reformed faith, and under an allegorical form it scarifies many a vice, many an individual, with irresistible force.<sup>1</sup> The fourth book, which has been called the French Protestants' martyrology, describes the butcheries of the Huguenots, and is a song of lamentation, and a prophecy of victory for the victims. The fifth book takes us to heaven, where God, his court, and Satan are brought together, and Satan records his triumphs on earth. In the sixth book the author cries aloud for vengeance :—" Come, just avengers, let all the earth come to these French Cains, to demand, in an immortal war, vengeance for the blood of their slaughtered brethren." The seventh book announces the judgment which God will administer upon the persecutors of his saints :—" Ye cities,<sup>2</sup> drunk with blood, and still wanting more, who thirst for blood and with blood are intoxicated, ye shall feel the terrible hand of God ; your land shall be iron, and your heaven brass." One may appreciate, what the limits of our work will not permit us to show more at length, the biting ferocity and the rude strength of d'Aubigné's satire.

<sup>1</sup> Take, for example, the following picture of Ignorance, drawn, doubtless, from its living impersonations :—

" Ses petits yeux charnus sourcilient sans repos,  
Sa grand' bouche demeure ouverte à tout propos ;  
Elle n'a sentiment de pitié ni misère :  
Toute cause lui est indifférente et claire.  
Son livre est le commun, sa loi ce qui lui plaît,  
Elle dit *ad idem*, puis demande que c'est."

<sup>2</sup> " Cités ivres de sang et encore altérées,  
Qui avez soif de sang et de sang enivrées,  
Vous sentirez de Dieu l'épouvantable main ;  
Vos terres seront fer et votre ciel d'airain."

In his *Universal History*, and in his *Memoirs*, properly called *Sa vie à ses enfants*, d'Aubigné was calmer, more impartial, not to say more dignified, than in his controversial poems and pamphlets. His prose style is full of vigour, the product of a lofty and earnest spirit, the studied work of one who looks to be read by succeeding generations. He had formed his mode of literary expression upon the grandest models of ancient times. No writer of the sixteenth century more frequently reminds us of the Latin poets and historians. An hour's turning of the pages brings to our memory a line or sentence from Horace, Virgil, Juvenal, and Livy. His letters (whereof a large proportion were first given to the world as recently as 1873)<sup>1</sup> are penetrated by the same refined tone, and breathe the *perfervidum ingenium* of a noble enthusiast. Enthusiast he was, more or less, in everything which he touched, with sufficient moral courage to support the position which his taste or principles led him to take up. Before we pass on let us observe him in another mood, as a *virtuoso*, stoutly maintaining his opinion against the friendly strictures of de Lanoue,<sup>2</sup> to whom he addresses a letter which begins as follows :—

“Sir—I cannot forget that, being at Paris, and returning with you from an excellent concert of a guitar, twelve viols, four spinets, four lutes, two *pandores* and two theorbos, as I was about to depart enraptured you invited me to come and to let me listen to something else, if I would enter your house ; and that you would take then la Planche, your valet, and your footman, and that it would be a marvel compared with what we had heard. You and M. de Constans always reproach me for loving

<sup>1</sup> By M. M. Eugène Réaume and de Caussade.

<sup>2</sup> This letter was, in my opinion, not addressed to the celebrated Protestant commander, who was about twenty years older than d'Aubigné, and who was also the author of twenty-six *Discours politiques et militaires* about the civil wars, the education of the nobility, military tactics, etc. ; but to his son Odet de Lanoue, lord de Téligny, himself a poet, and of nearly the same age as d'Aubigné.

a loud noise, and for not sufficiently understanding the composition of music to relish a trio or duo after a piece of six or seven instruments. It is in vain for me to tell you that I am delighted with a simple vocal trio, admiring the art of the composer ; and this is a pleasure of the mind. I confess that I greatly love to feed the senses when there is the same mental pleasure in it.”<sup>1</sup>

D'Aubigné, after having been married for a second time about ten years, died at Geneva, and, as might have been expected, in exile. He was then nearly eighty years old, and it is said that on his deathbed he faintly muttered, “ The happy day has come . . . glory be to God ; let us delight in it.” So died a man who would not change his convictions, even to please a king, and that king his friend ; who, in his youth, sacrificed all his prospects of love and ambition rather than commit a base action ; and who, during his long and arduous career, never belied his character as an honest man, and as a steady but sincere Calvinist. Though stern to himself, his friends, and his enemies, he felt deeply. When he discovered that his son Constant was steeped in vices, and had become a spy and a traitor, he tore him from his heart and cursed him ; when he lost his first wife, Suzanne de Lezai, the blow stunned him for nearly three years, and his lamentations are even now painful to read. In his *History*, as well as in his *Memoirs*, proofs of deep feeling abound, and after having read them, we come to the conclusion that men like d'Aubigné were scarce in his time, and are not plentiful even now.

## § 2. COURTIER-HISTORIANS.

D'Aubigné, as we have seen, was pleased by few men and with few things in his age, and his works are distinguished by a strong propensity to censure. It was a literary tone which

<sup>1</sup> *Oeuvres complètes de Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné*, ed. by M. M. Réaume and de Caussade, vol. i. p. 465.



harmonised only too well with the epoch in which he lived ; and the rôle was played by more than two or three of the best amongst his contemporaries. But to different eyes the same object conveys different impressions ; and the many historians, diarists, and writers of memoirs in the sixteenth century, though they agree in representing their age as one of sanguinary strife and great corruption, vary much in the spirit with which they treat of passing events, and in the lessons or the entertainment which they extract from them. Pierre de Bourdeille, lord of Brantôme,<sup>1</sup> is, like d'Aubigné, a censor ; but, unlike d'Aubigné, he was not a moral censor, though he admires the character, as is evident in the eulogy which he passes upon de l'Hôpital.<sup>2</sup> Very wide, however, was the distinction between these two serious and venerable men and the light-hearted, light-tongued biographer and scandalmonger who has given us such a piquant account of the men and women of his generation. Brantôme was as much shocked as any of his contemporaries at the corruption of the times ; but it was with the "Fie, for shame !" of a man who sees to the end the scandal which he reprobates, and subsequently relates it to his friends with an air of mystery and a conscientious minuteness.

Pierre de Bourdeille was brought up at the court of Marguerite of Navarre, sister of Francis the First ; and it was from her nephew, Henry II., that he received the rich abbey of Brantôme : a gift which constituted him to the end of his life rather a courtier than an abbé. He farmed out his religious duties, and travelled much ; both in the wake of the court of the Valois, and beyond the seas. He went, as he tells us himself, "into Italy, into Scotland by sea, and through France by land ;" and he delights in letting us know the

<sup>1</sup> 1527-1614.

<sup>2</sup> "That man was a second Cato the Censor, and knew very well how to censure and correct the corrupt world. He thoroughly looked the part, with his long white beard, his pale face, his grave mien."

favour with which the great people everywhere received him. Of the women especially, even if they were his hosts, even if it were the Queen of England herself, he has something to tell which redounds rather to his own renown than to their credit. Not that he sees the real effect of his words, or suspects that his very praise is compromising. He can say nothing but what is favourable of Catherine de Medici, of Marguerite of Valois, of Mary Stuart. He was one of Mary's companions in her flight from France to Scotland, and ever afterwards he can remember her only as a martyr and a victim of cruelty, on whom the world had lavished "lies and abuse." The description of the voyage has been often quoted ; but we may find excuse for transferring one passage of it direct from Brantôme's pages.

"Just as she was making up her mind to leave the harbour, and as the oars were on the point of being set to work, she saw a ship put out to sea, and sink and perish before her eyes, and the greater part of the sailors drowned. . . . And seeing this, she at once exclaimed : 'Ah, God ! what an omen for a voyage is this !' And the boat having left the harbour, and a slight wind having arisen, they took to the sails, and the oarsmen rested. She could think of nothing else to do but lean with her arms upon the stern of the vessel, beside the helm, and melt into a great fit of weeping, stedfastly casting her lovely eyes upon the harbour, and the town which she had quitted, ever and anon uttering these sad words : 'Adieu, France ! Adieu, France !'—repeating them from time to time. And this mournful fit lasted nearly five hours, until night came on, and they asked her if she would not tear herself away, and take something to eat. Then, weeping more than ever, she said : 'Now at last, then, dear France, I lose you for ever from my sight, for the dark night is jealous of my pleasure in beholding you as long as I could, and draws a black veil before my eyes, to deprive me of such a joy. Adieu, then, dear France ; I shall see you never more.'"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Vie des Dames Illustres*. His other principal works are entitled *Hommes Illustres*, *Capitaines étrangers*, *Dames galantes*, and *Duels*.

Pathetic passages such as this, and passages of graphic and salacious descriptions, which we have not courage to quote, are the most characteristic of the writings of Brantôme. Clear, candid, prolix, loose, and slipshod in style, he is less of a literary model than of a suggestive and entertaining painter of social habits and characters. A historian and a satirist, he is so rather in spite of himself than in accordance with rule. He is the Grammont and the Pepys of his age, who, if he could have kept his eyes upon its best rather than upon its worst features, might possibly have been its Plutarch.

Amongst the graver, and at the same time more commonplace and less readable contemporaries of d'Aubigné and Brantôme, who wrote the history of their generation and the memoirs of its prominent men, Philippe de Mornay,<sup>1</sup> lord du Plessis-Marly, deserves a distinguished place. A diplomatist, a soldier, and a commentator, his writings have had a decided value in the eyes of all subsequent historians as those of a man who played no inconsiderable part in the events of the civil and religious wars of France.<sup>2</sup> More replete, more familiar, more communicative of the secret history of the age are the memoirs of Pierre de l'Estoile,<sup>3</sup> a Parisian bourgeois, to whom no scrap of gossip came amiss, and who has left us the small-talk of his day, set down as carefully as though it were the state papers upon which the history of the country was to be shaped. His *Journal of Henry III. and Henry IV.* is charged with petty details of the most everyday life; and yet hardly any writer of the same epoch supplies us with so much minutely accurate material towards a full appreciation of the character of the times. His *Manifesto of the Ladies of the Court* attains to a higher literary standard,

<sup>1</sup> 1549-1623.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires de Messire Philippes de Mornay, seigneur du Plessis-Marly, etc.*, of which the first and second volume appeared at La Forest in 1624 and 1625, the third and fourth at Amsterdam in 1652.

<sup>3</sup> 1546-1611.

and is more nearly a genuine satire than a history ; though, in point of fact, it is neither. The annals of the latter half of the sixteenth century could not be so much as undertaken without the assistance of l'Estoile ; and yet he is no more, in himself, an annalist of his own generation than a stack of new-made bricks is a finished house.

The end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century embraced several writers of greatly superior historical instinct to that of l'Estoile, and of a capacity and breadth at least equal to those of de Mornay. The *Letters* of Cardinal d'Ossat,<sup>1</sup> who must be coupled with Duperron as having contributed to bring about the conversion of Henry IV., and the *Negotiations* of Jeannin,<sup>2</sup> have been described by a recent writer<sup>3</sup> as the two classics of diplomatists and politicians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ; whilst Lord Chesterfield recommends the first work to his son as the most fit to prepare him for public business.<sup>4</sup> The praise is scarcely exaggerated ; and in fact d'Ossat may claim much of the credit of having sharpened and polished the keen point of that supple and well-tempered style which was for centuries, and is to a large extent even in the present day, the diplomatic instrument of the courts of Europe.

Armand d'Ossat began his public life as secretary to Paul de Foix, ambassador of France at the Court of Sixtus V. ; and most of the letters in which he communicated to his royal master the ideas and wishes of the Pope during so many delicate negotiations, were drawn up—it is said—by the young diplomatist. So serviceable was d'Ossat, and so skilful in his conduct of affairs, that Henry IV. eagerly availed himself of his services, and kept him in an unofficial capacity at Rome during the sojourn of successive representatives of

<sup>1</sup> 1586-1604.

<sup>2</sup> 1540-1622.

<sup>3</sup> Poirson, *Histoire de Henri IV.*, vol. ii. p. 497.

<sup>4</sup> Letter of the 20th of July, 1747.



France at the sacred College, and until his reconciliation with the Holy See was finally completed by Duperron. "When Duperron arrived," says M. Henri Martin,<sup>1</sup> on the 12th of July 1595, he found the business well advanced by d'Ossat. . . . On the 30th of July du Perron and d'Ossat presented the king's petition to the Holy Father." D'Ossat himself<sup>2</sup> gives us the words of this petition, doubtless the product of his own pen; wherein Henry prayed Clement VIII. to sanction the absolution already accorded him by the French prelates, and sought from the Pope "his sovereign absolution from the censures incurred by him and declared against him in respect of his past errors, for the greater safety and repose of his soul, and for the good of his whole kingdom, and for the reconciliation and reunion of the said kingdom with the Holy See." And when the absolution of the Pope had been finally accorded by the Sacred College, and the time arrived for its declaration, "the choristers intoned the *Miserere*; at each verse the Pope, with a small whip, smote alternately Duperron and d'Ossat, kneeling at his feet; then the Holy Father rose, repeated the formula of absolution with his own mouth, and declared that he received Henry into the pale of the Church, naming him King of France and most Christian."<sup>3</sup>

That little whip was worth a bishopric to d'Ossat, who, it is asserted, recoiled from the humiliation inflicted on him vicariously for his royal master. He afterwards became a

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire de France*, vol. x., *sub ann.* 1595.

<sup>2</sup> *Lettres de d'Ossat*, vol. i. p. 462, ed. d'Amsterdam, 1708.

<sup>3</sup> It hardly pertains to our sketch of the literary history of France to point out that there was one who did still more to bring about Henry's abjuration of Protestantism, than either Duperron or d'Ossat—the beautiful Gabrielle d'Estrées, afterwards Duchess de Beaufort. It was she who urged the king to make his peace with Rome; she who impelled him to his action against the Franche-Comté; she who is accused of contriving the death of the Duke of Longueville; she again, who, it is said, inspired her royal lover with a sweet love-song.



cardinal and died, as he had lived, an honest though a poor man.

Jeannin, president of the Parliament of Dijon, in his youth an ardent partisan of the League, was a diplomatist of the highest order. Successively ambassador in Spain and Belgium, he showed himself in this and in every other capacity a patriotic Frenchman and a conscientious servant of the state. It was he who, on the general council of the League, before the final triumph of Henry IV., steadily resisted the encroaching influences of Spain in French affairs, and who dissuaded the Duke of Mayenne, over whom he exerted the power of a strong mind over a merely obstinate will, from accepting the disgraceful offers of assistance from the Spanish court. A year or two later he induced Mayenne to come to terms with Henry, and himself conducted the negotiations upon which the treaty of Folembray was based ; thus giving the *coup de grâce* to the League. He was sent by Henry to represent him at the court of the States-General ; and, after the king's death, was one of the most trusted and prudent counsellors of Mary de Medici. Into his hands fell the direction of the national finances upon the resignation of Sully ; and, most significant and honourable act in the life of so thorough a Catholic, it was Jeannin who, in his old age, did what lay in his power to induce a peace with the Huguenots.<sup>1</sup>

As a diplomatist Jeannin is especially famous for his mission to the United Provinces, which was attended by most important results, and virtually secured for Holland its independent position among the European states. Here, as elsewhere, Jeannin placed himself in direct opposition to the policy of Spain ; and the counsels of the French ambassador, together with the moral aid which he induced his royal master to extend to Holland, contributing as these services did to the attainment of independence by the Seven Provinces, struck

<sup>1</sup> 1622.

the first great blow at the overweening despotism of Spain. Jeannin, however, has a more legitimate claim upon our notice even in respect of his mission in Holland. Himself an author, he was at all times a willing patron of literary men, and he proved on many occasions that he could play the part of Mæcenas with grace and effect. At Leyden, amongst the refugees who had fled before the storm which Jeannin himself had been indirectly instrumental in raising, he found the learned Scaliger, living in comparative poverty and neglect. He endeavoured, without success, to secure for him the payment of a pension promised years before by Henry III. Writing to de Thou, after the death of Scaliger, Jeannin says: "M. de l'Escalle (Scaliger) is much regretted here, where his virtues and great proficiency in letters have been better recognised than in France; and in truth it is a shame that we took no more care of him whilst he was alive. But they who could have inclined the mind of the king to recall and honour him . . . neglected to do so, and I, who would have attempted it, was not powerful enough to procure for him the competence which he no longer needs. I should have liked to attend his funeral, but, as we are here engaged upon affairs for which it has pleased the king to send me hither, I could not pay him this last duty, to my great regret."

There were not wanting amongst the authors of this eventful age, men who were not content with describing the actions which passed before their eyes, but who attempted in addition to draw from them the lessons which they seemed to involve, and who approach, by however slight a degree, towards the philosophy of history. Of these, the most noteworthy were Tavannes and Sully. The *Memoirs* of Marshal Gaspard de Saulx de Tavannes,<sup>1</sup> are less a bare history of facts than a medley of battles and politics, of commentaries and excursions upon almost every imaginable subject; the

<sup>1</sup> 1509-1573.

slightest suggestion being sufficient to set the biographer discoursing of assassinations, fortifications, avarice, alchemy, education, the philosophy of death, and what not. The Tavannes—with the exception of William, the eldest son of the Marshal—were orthodox and prejudiced Catholics, strong supporters of the League, with a bitter hatred of Protestantism, and a contemptuous disbelief in the merits and genuineness of Henry IV. The testimony of the historian must therefore be taken with discrimination ; but the work is nevertheless not without its historical value, and not without a certain degree of literary merit.

D'Aubigné was not the only Protestant statesman and historian of his time who afforded a conspicuous example of the powerful, and for the most part beneficial influences produced by the reformed religion upon the tone and temper of the sixteenth century. He had his parallel, from many points of view, in Maximilien de Béthune, Duke de Sully,<sup>1</sup> who, like him, was an intimate friend of Henry IV., a grave, common-sense, and cool-headed Protestant, a soldier and a statesman, and who, like d'Aubigné, had neither the chance nor the disposition to dance attendance at the court of Mary de Medici, after the star of Henry had set. Both men display the candour, the moral breadth and height, the calmness and self-restraint, which have been the distinguishing qualities of the French Protestants in literature as in public and private life, and which they have inherited as much from the stern discipline of persecution as from the natural effects of an attitude of conscientious opposition to authority. The writings of the earlier Huguenots are characterised by nothing more than by their purity of conception, and their freedom from unclean suggestions and meretricious adornments. Malice they have in abundance—satire, as we have seen, of the keenest order ; but they are, as a rule, pre-eminently pure and serious.

<sup>1</sup> 1560-1641.

D'Aubigné is the type of the class at its highest and strongest ; Sully perhaps comes nearest to his standard, though with less of dignity, still less of satirical force, and infinitely more of self-esteem and triviality.

If d'Aubigné was the loyal servant of Henry the Fourth, Sully aimed at being above all things his useful servant. No doubt he was sincerely attached to the king. He had been his companion from childhood, and he appears to have given his royal patron uniformly wise and prudent advice. It is alleged of him that his extreme jealousy and the fear of being supplanted by counsellors of the orthodox faith led him to malign his rivals in the king's affection ; that Villeroy, de Mornay, Jeannin, and others, suffered thus at his hands. But it was at all events natural that he should have genuinely distrusted the counsels of the Roman Catholics, and warned the monarch against them with a good conscience. As a minister of finance, to whose charge was intrusted the superintendence of the national revenues and expenditure, Sully acquitted himself with great credit. According to a financial report, published in 1609, the Government had, since Sully's administration, paid off one hundred million francs, was in treaty to redeem thirty to thirty-five million francs of domains and stock, had an income of about twenty millions, a reserve of twenty to twenty-two millions, of which sixteen or seventeen millions was in silver ; the arsenals were full of arms and ammunition, and many galleys completely fitted out were in the harbours of the Mediterranean. This proves that Sully was undoubtedly a first-rate financier, and that the services which he rendered to the State in this capacity were by no means inconsiderable. As a soldier he had proved himself often brave, and not seldom venturesome. Besides this he was superintendent of the fortifications and grand-master of the artillery. Yet, a year after the death of Henry IV., in the year 1611, he was removed from office ; or rather, as we

are informed by de l'Estoile,<sup>1</sup> "he preferred asking for his dismissal to waiting until it was given him."

The work by which Sully is best known to us is the *Memoirs*, written under his direction by four secretaries, in his country seat at Villebon. The title is in itself a long quotation, and, more or less, an epitome of the work.<sup>1</sup> All that it says or implies—at all events of Sully—is true, and the examples are copious and minute. Certainly the book is not amusing reading. The long periods and prolix narratives, professedly addressed by the secretaries to their master, are, no doubt, the product of their amalgamated styles. The matter is for the most part Sully's own, and it is in fact a monument of the practical, patient, sober, and serious statesmanship of the sixteenth century. We must keep fresh in our memory the character of such men as de l'Hôpital, d'Aubigné, and Sully, if only for the purpose of contrasting them with certain of the counsellors of France who lived a century and a couple of centuries later.

<sup>1</sup> *Régistre Journal de Louis XIII.*, sub. ann.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires des sages et royales économies d'Estat, domestiques, politiques et militaires de Henry le Grand, l'exemplaire des roys, le prince des vertus, des armes et des loiz, et le père en effet de ses peuples françois, et des servitudes utiles, obéissances convenables et administrations loyales de Maximilian de Béthune, l'un des plus confidens, familiers et utiles soldats et serviteurs du grand Mars des François. Dédiez à la France, à tous les bons soldats et tous peuples françois.*



## CHAPTER VI.

## § 1. RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY IN THE CLASSICAL RENAISSANCE.

To the pulpit eloquence of the preachers of the League, and to the controversial quasi-religious pamphlets of the Civil War, succeeded, towards the close of the sixteenth century, a graver and calmer eloquence of the pen, which, coupled with the scholarship of the later Renaissance, resulted in a distinct forward movement towards a definite philosophy of religion and morals. The sword had done, or was about to complete, its task, and Roman Catholic orthodoxy was to give its tone and colour to the religious literature of France. The ecclesiastics of the reign of Henry IV. were to impress the stamp of Rome upon the majority of the devotional and controversial writings of the epoch; Cardinal Duperron, Saint François de Sales, Camus, were to bestow upon these works the refulgence of lofty rhetoric and genuine piety. And behind them was to come Pascal, no less pious, no less eloquent, infinitely more Catholic in any sense of the word except their own: Pascal, the great moral reformer of his day, who could evolve the philosophy of religion without creating dogmas, and who could dress its doctrine in rhetoric without launching an anathema against those who were deaf to the charm of his eloquence.

Jacques Davy Duperron,<sup>1</sup> was the son of a Protestant

<sup>1</sup> 1556-1618.

minister, and when quite young, became a Catholic. He had won his way to the king's right hand, and to the highest dignities of the Church, by sheer power of tongue and grace of manner. It is recorded of him that, after he had entered the Sacred College, Paul V. said on one occasion : " Let us pray God to inspire Cardinal Duperron, for he will persuade us whatever he chooses." Eloquence alone does not persuade. In a bad cause it is, with discriminating hearers, more likely to repel ; but the genius of Duperron was subtle and logical. He was at once the preacher and the disputant, and it was to him that Henry IV. was wont to send those whom he desired to bring round to his adopted faith. We could have no better testimony to his peculiar power than that of Casaubon, one of those objects of the royal solicitude. " Of a truth," says the scholar, " he is *fulmen hominis*. I have resisted hitherto, but I must confess to you that he has raised in me many scruples which abide, and to which I know not how to make good answer." Still more notable and better known is his victory over de Mornay, who had asserted in his *Institution of the Eucharist* that the mass was unknown in the earlier ages of Christianity, and whom Duperron signally worsted before the king at Fontainebleau, displaying infinite skill in fence, vast erudition, remarkable spirit, and courtesy in debate. It is hardly surprising that Bossuet should apostrophise such a man as a " rare and admirable genius, whose works, well-nigh divine, are the strongest rampart of the Church against modern heretics."

Duperron's extravagant eulogy of Ronsard, in the funeral oration which he pronounced upon the poet's death in 1586, undoubtedly says more for his eloquence than for his literary acumen, or even for his judgment. His writings everywhere confirm the observation. The bulk of them consists of sermons, chiefly upon points of doctrine, which he treats with all the ardour and enthusiasm, tempered with elegant mode-

ration of style, natural to a polished controversialist. Let us quote from one of these sermons—and it is easy to give a sample of what is homogeneous ; not so much on account of their intrinsic merits as because they were, in point of fact, models of the pulpit eloquence of succeeding generations, to which not even Bossuet himself might have disdained to turn. It is half-a-dozen sentences from the peroration of his sermon on the Holy Ghost ; and observe the balance of style and of thought, the persuasive adornment of the clear and rounded periods, which must have gone straight to the heart of his hearers :—

“And Thou, O most holy, most high, most glorious Spirit, who givest kings to their peoples and pastors to the Churches, source of all order, spiritual and temporal, author of all discipline, ecclesiastical and political . . . Spirit of peace and unity, in honour of whom we are here assembled, listen to the prayers of those who invoke Thee, and beseech Thee for the reunion of Thy Church. This day we celebrate the day whereon, by Thy visible descent, Thou didst make of all the souls of the believers one soul, and of all hearts one heart. Even so make them now by Thy invisible descent, and unite again in the one body of Christ all who bear the name of Christian. Bring back to the flock of the Shepherd of shepherds all who have wandered away from Him, and keep in it all who have remained. To those give grace to return to the way of salvation ; to these give the grace of perseverance.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Et toi, ô très-saint, très-haut, très-glorieux Esprit qui donnes les rois aux peuples et les pasteurs aux églises, source de tout ordre spirituel et temporel, auteur de toute discipline ecclésiastique et politique . . . Esprit de paix et d'unité, en honneur duquel nous sommes ici assemblés, écoute les vœux de ceux qui t'invoquent et te réclament pour la réunion de ton église. Nous célébrons aujourd'hui le jour auquel, par ta descente visible, tu fis, de toutes les âmes des croyants, une âme, et de tous les cœurs, un cœur. Fais encore de même maintenant par ta descente invisible, et rassemble tous ceux qui portent le nom de chrétiens en un même corps de Christ. Ramène au troupeau du pasteur des pasteurs tous ceux qui s'en sont écartés, et y conserve tous ceux qui y sont demeurés. Donne aux uns la grâce de revenir au chemin du salut ; donne aux autres celle d'y persévérer.”

A greater orator than Duperron, who, if he had possessed the same worldly disposition, might have risen to higher worldly dignities, and who, if he had not been made a saint, might have attained a still greater literary fame than he now enjoys, was François de Sales,<sup>1</sup> originally a priest, then an advocate at Chambéry, and again a priest, but who found his true vocation in the ranks of the priesthood. An enthusiastic Catholic, he set himself almost single-handed to oppose the spread of Protestantism in Savoy, and he succeeded to a remarkable degree. The fame of his piety and eloquence penetrated to the capital, so that when he came to Paris with a petition to Henry IV. to guarantee the exercise of religious liberty in Gex,<sup>2</sup> he was more than once invited to preach before the Court, and by his sermons alone made many converts to the orthodox creed. Persuasive and conciliatory, ready of wit and skilful in controversy, learned, too, as the Cardinal Duperron frankly declares, above all the logicians of his day, he could be at times vehement and even violent in his declamation.<sup>3</sup> His choice was nevertheless deliberately made for the style which "savours rather of love to one's neighbour than of indignation—love even for the Huguenots, whom we must treat with great compassion, not flattering, but commiserating them." Such was the advice which he gave to the Archbishop of Bourges, to whom he addressed a letter on *The True Mode of Preaching*.

The proselytising zeal of François de Sales was manifested on many occasions, and earned for him the great triumphs and fame of his life. He accepted a mission from the Pope to attempt the reconversion of Theodore de Beza, and went secretly, on four separate occasions, to the house of the latter

<sup>1</sup> 1567-1622.

<sup>2</sup> The neighbouring Protestants of Geneva seem to have extended their authority over Gex, although it was within the French frontier.

<sup>3</sup> Sayous, *Histoire de la littérature française à l'étranger au dix-septième siècle*, vol. i. p. 15.



in Geneva. In the end, Beza admitted that he thought it possible to be saved within the pale of the Catholic Church : which has been hailed as a notable victory for the future saint, but which is the only one reaped by him on that occasion. At another time, we are told, he declared himself ready to undertake the conversion of James I. of England : but for some reason or other the holy Father did not think well to fly his hawk—if such a gentle preacher may be called so—at such a conspicuous quarry. This mode of evangelisation was much in vogue amongst the contemporaries of François de Sales ; and it must be confessed that the example afforded by the recantation of Henry IV., added possibly to a natural desire of wiping out the traditions of the St. Bartholomew's massacre, and the memory of that affectionate missionary Gabrielle d'Estrées, were well calculated to stimulate the milder processes of the Church of Rome.

Madame de Charmoisy, the young and worldly wife of a relative of de Sales, hearing the bishop preach in Geneva,<sup>1</sup> was weaned on the spot from her life of pleasure and fashion, and resolved to devote herself to a life of piety. François de Sales hailed her resolution with delight, and sent her from time to time a number of familiar directions and counsels to aid her in the task of perseverance. Two years afterwards her confessor persuaded the bishop to arrange these letters in order, and to give them to the public. Such was the occasion and the origin of the *Introduction à la vie dévote*.<sup>2</sup> It is useless to attempt an analysis of this “art of divine love,” as this work has been aptly termed. Such science as its method contains—and its author disclaims for it even the credit of method—is but the succession of confirmation in good resolves,

<sup>1</sup> The bishopric of Geneva was the sole reward which François de Sales could be prevailed upon to accept, in 1602, at the hands of the Duke of Savoy. After his death de Sales was canonised.

<sup>2</sup> Published in 1608.



exercise in the acts of devotion, gradual elevation and expansion of lofty aims, with the consolations and refreshments of a purified soul, through which most of us have to pass before attaining the hard residuum of experience that we can carry with us to the grave. The *Introduction* was addressed to Philothée, a pseudonym for the "Baroness de Charmoisy;" and its publication was a great success, and caused a wonderful sensation. It was almost immediately translated into all European languages, and forty editions were sold from its first publication until the year 1656. It seems to have suggested to François de Sales a second devotional work, which he was eight years in composing: *Philothée, ou traité de l'amour de Dieu*. These works, his *Sermons*, *Letters*, and one or two smaller treatises, comprising the *Standard of the Cross*, *Spiritual Conversations*, and the like, constitute his literary remains.

Not much, we fear, can be said for the style of these works, which are scarcely as clear, and decidedly less balanced and eloquent than those of Duperron. Three sentences to a page are something like the average measure of prolixity—a prolixity, be it understood, not of a weak man who is doubtful of his own meaning, but of a man firm and clear in his ideas, whose words overflow simply through the richness of his expanding thoughts. Let us take from the *Introduction* three sentences—to wit, "On True Friendships," which at all events contain a distinct conception, clearly and fully illustrated, with abundance of support and of decoration.

"Many, it may be, will tell you that you should have no kind of special affection and friendship, inasmuch as that occupies the heart, distracts the mind, gives rises to desires; but they are mistaken in their advice; for they have seen in the writings of many holy and devout authors that special friendships and extraordinary affections vastly injured monks; they think that it is the same with the rest of the world, but there is much to

be said on this point; for admitting that in a well-regulated monastery the common design of all aims at true devotion, it is not there requisite to make these special communications, for fear lest, seeking in particular for what is common, one should pass from particularities to partialities; but as for those who live amongst worldly people, and who embrace true virtue, it is necessary to be bound one to another in a holy and sacred friendship, for by this means they give each other courage, they aid and conduct each other to what is good. And as those who journey across a plain have no need to take each other's hand, whilst those who are on rugged and slippery paths support each other, so as to proceed more safely;<sup>1</sup> so those who are in a monastery have no need of special friendships, whilst those who are in the world have such need, to assure and succour one another amidst so many difficult places which they have to get over. In the world all do not combine for the same end, all have not the same mind; we must, therefore, no doubt, get on separately, and make friendships according to our inclinations; and this particularity really creates a partiality, but a holy partiality, which causes no division save that of the good from the evil, of the sheep from the goats, of the bees from the drones; a necessary separation."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A touch of local colour. François de Sales made several journeys across the Alps; and the pleasure which he took in them is manifest, in various allusions which he makes in his letters to Madame de Chantal, the grandmother of Madame de Sévigné.

<sup>2</sup> "Plusieurs vous diront peut-être, qu'il ne faut avoir aucune sorte de particulière affection et amitié, d'autant que cela occupe le cœur, distrait l'esprit, engendre les envies; mais ils se trompent en leurs conseils; car ils ont vu les écrits de plusieurs saints et dévots auteurs, que les amitiés particulières et les affections extraordinaires nuisaient infiniment aux religieux; ils crient que c'en soit de même du reste du monde; mais il y a bien à dire: car attendu qu'en un monastère bien réglé le dessein commun de tous tend à la vraie dévotion, il n'est pas requis d'y faire ces particulières communications, de peur que, cherchant en particulier ce qui est commun, on ne passe des particularités aux partialités; mais quant à ceux qui sont entre les mondains, et qui embrassent la vraie vertu, il leur est nécessaire de s'allier les uns aux autres par une sainte et sacrée amitié: car par le moyen d'icelle ils s'animent, ils s'aident et ils s'entreportent au bien. Et comme ceux qui cheminent dans la plaine n'ont pas besoin de se prêter la main; mais ceux qui sont dans des chemins scabreux et glissants s'entretiennent l'un l'autre pour cheminer sûre-

The *Traité sur l'amour de Dieu*, less celebrated than the *Introduction*, is undoubtedly a superior work in the matter of style and arrangement. Our author can also write in an easy and natural vein ; and is nowhere more so than in his correspondence with Madame de Chantal, who, won over to a religious life after the death of her husband, founded the order of the Visitandines, and formed an acquaintance with François de Sales, which ripened into an affection of almost passionate warmth.<sup>1</sup> Bossuet is inclined to reproach de Sales with encouraging the ecstatic or hysterical developments of religious feeling ; and perhaps the latter's attachment to Madame de Chantal was the issue, if indeed it was not the cause of this tendency. Their letters, his in particular, are the unfettered outpourings of purely emotional souls ; and they must be read with a delicate appreciation, such as is due to the confessions of any ardent spirit, let his beliefs or opinions be what they may—be he an Abelard, a de Sales, or a Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Amongst the friends and disciples of François de Sales—for it was impossible that such a man should have been without disciples—the only one whom we need specially mention is Camus, Bishop of Belley.<sup>2</sup> His genius was very eccentric, and has secured for him a certain renown. As a *littérateur* he ought to have been an unfettered satirist and writer of tales, for which his sparkling wit and lively imagination particularly fitted him. As a priest, an eloquent

ment : ainsi ceux qui sont en Religion, n'ont pas besoin des amitiés particulières ; mais ceux qui sont au monde, en ont nécessité, pour s'assurer et se secourir les uns les autres, parmi tant de mauvais passages qu'il leur faut franchir. Au monde, tous ne conspirent pas à une même fin, tous n'ont pas le même esprit : il faut donc, sans doute, se tirer à part, et faire des amitiés selon notre prétention ; et cette particularité fait voirement une partialité, mais une partialité sainte qui ne fait aucune division sinon celle du bien et du mal, des brebis et des chèvres, des abeilles et des frelons, séparation nécessaire."

<sup>1</sup> When he first knew her de Sales was thirty-seven ; the lady five years younger.

<sup>2</sup> 1582-1653.

preacher, and an inveterate enemy of the begging-friars, he was pure in life and in thought, and sincere in his attacks upon the immorality of the age. In so far as he was able, he combined the gravity of an earnest Christian with the freedom and abandon of an incisive pamphleteer; and he succeeded but indifferently. He could not restrain his eager brain and hand. He is said to have written one hundred and eighty separate works; many of them so lively, so much charged with fiction and extravagance, that de Sales remonstrated with him. The good bishop of Geneva has been blamed for encouraging his friends in their excess of language, which, dangerous even when confined to the expression of religious feeling, becomes doubly so when the boundaries of its licence are extended. But de Sales was scarcely responsible for the vagaries of his friend, Camus, whose own natural bent is amply sufficient to account for his excess, and whose fault he frequently attempted to modify. "When the vine makes too much wood," he told him once, "it is then that it produces least fruit. By burdening the memory we destroy it, as we extinguish lamps when we pour in too much oil, and choke plants by watering them too freely." The bishop of Belley is chiefly interesting to the student of literature by virtue of his attempts to adapt the novel to the language of religion, of which *Palombe* is the best known and most readable. Camus refused several large bishoprics, and finally resigned his own cure, to devote the remainder of his life as the spiritual guide of the poor patients in the Hospital of the Incurables at Paris. The ending of such a life is superior to that of any novel.

## § 2. PASCAL AND THE PORT-ROYALISTS.

Let us advance in our review of the religious philosophy of this age by the interval of a lifetime—from François de Sales, who died in 1622, to Blaise Pascal,<sup>1</sup> born in the following year. We have seen in how far de Sales was beyond the preachers of the League, how their violence, their extravagance, their unmeasured and almost unscrupulous language was sublimed in the elegant amiable eloquence of the Bishop of Geneva. We shall be able to measure now the distance between the ardent proselytisers and ecstatic musers of the time of Henry IV., and the calm, philosophic moralists of the seventeenth century; the thoughtful and moderate minds of Port-Royal.

Pascal was a philosopher in a double sense; for he displayed, from an early age, an almost equal talent in the pursuit of moral and mental science. At the age of sixteen he wrote a Latin treatise on *Conic Sections*, which astonished even the great mathematician Descartes. At the age of nineteen he invented a calculating machine, which, in our time, has been improved and perfected by Babbage. As a young man he studied mathematics with ardour and success; adding, by his independent researches, most valuable confirmation to the discoveries of the master minds of the day—Galileo,<sup>2</sup> Descartes, and Torricelli.<sup>3</sup> His own *Treatise on the Cycloid*, which was published only three years before his death, was written in eight days, amidst great sufferings, and whilst lying on a sick-bed. It is a notable contribution to the mathematical analysis of the infinite. The death of his father<sup>4</sup> left him wealthy but lonely, for one of his sisters was married, and the other, Jacqueline, was in a nunnery. For

<sup>1</sup> 1623-1662.<sup>2</sup> 1564-1642.<sup>3</sup> 1608-1647.<sup>4</sup> 1651.



a short time he moved among people of a certain standing in society. But in 1654 he began to entertain serious thoughts about religion, and whether it was a vision or an accident, as some pretend, which caused this change, he entered the following year into the solitude of Port-Royal des Champs.<sup>1</sup> Here, while the untimely end of his brilliant career was approaching, the more metaphysical questions which have chiefly made him famous seemed to claim the better half of his time and thoughts. There the *Lettres Provinciales* were written and published in 1656; there he undertook to write, in his latter years, a defence of Christianity, and laboured upon it as steadily as his failing strength would permit.<sup>2</sup> Fragments only remain to us, and they were given to the world under the title of *Pensées*, but not until after the author's death. They possess all the characteristics of his clear, forcible, and nervous style, and sufficiently reveal the grandeur of what was to have been his masterpiece. The world lost much by the early death of one who combined in himself the strength of a Locke and a Paley, not to say of a Newton also.

Pascal was, by inheritance and by choice, a Jansenist. Cornelius Jansen<sup>3</sup> was still alive when Pascal was a young man; and the character and opinions of the austere Dutchman, who, in 1617, had been raised to the bishopric of Ypres, but who never lost an opportunity of protesting that the Church of Rome had departed from the ancient discipline and purity of Christianity, had produced a lasting effect upon

<sup>1</sup> Port-Royal des Champs, situated about eighteen miles from Paris, was a Cistercian convent, which, founded in 1240, and having fallen into decay, was revived and reformed in 1608, by Mother Angélique Arnauld, then only seventeen years old. In 1625 the sisters removed to Paris; but a number of religiously inclined men went to live at Port-Royal. This institution was condemned by the Pope in 1709; and the buildings were pulled down, and the tombs desecrated, by the order of Louis XIV., in 1710.

<sup>2</sup> From the age of eighteen, he himself informs us, he never passed a day without pain. He seems indeed to have been sickly from his very birth.

<sup>3</sup> 1585-1638.

the mind of his future apologist. The principal contentions of Jansen, which were maintained with equal persistence by his friend Jean Duvergier,<sup>1</sup> Abbé of Saint Cyran, were that a radical error in Church dogma and economy had been introduced into the Christian faith, that even the Council of Trent had not restored the purity of evangelistic doctrine ; that unless the Church returned to the spirit of Augustine, or at least of Saint Bernard, she had no hope but to go on from bad to worse. But the spirit of Augustine, as they interpreted it, was very much the spirit of Calvin ; they believed in predestination to eternal bliss and misery, in the hopelessness of those who died unbaptized, in the personal appearance of Antichrist, in the interference of evil spirits in the affairs of the world. With these sombre extravagances of faith, however, they united a gentleness of action and a lofty morality ; and they had many followers within the pale of the Church. Amongst these, one of the most famous was the noble Jacqueline Arnauld,<sup>2</sup> better known as the *Mère Angélique*, the abbess of the nunnery of Port-Royal, a personal friend of François de Sales, who had devoted her life to the cultivation, in herself and in others, of an ascetic virtue, and who clung to the possibility of a complete transformation of the human heart, even before death. Inspired by this example, and urged by the application of the Jansenist theories to their everyday life, a number of young men settled in the neighbourhood of Port-Royal, and lived the lives of hermits ; foremost amongst them being Antoine Lemaistre<sup>3</sup> and Antoine Arnauld,<sup>4</sup> nephew and brother of Angélique, Nicole, Lancelot, and Lemaistre de Sacy. Persecution only stimulated the growth of these new opinions ; Duvergier was thrown into prison, which he only left on the death of Richelieu, in 1642, whom he survived about ten months. It was in this year that Antoine Arnauld, better known as *le grand Arnauld*, wrote his *Fre-*

<sup>1</sup> 1581-1643.<sup>2</sup> 1591-1661.<sup>3</sup> 1608-1658.<sup>4</sup> 1612-1694.

*quent Communion*, the first work of that scientific school of religious philosophy of which Port-Royal was the focus, and Pascal was to be the principal exponent.

The best claim which the community of Port-Royal has upon our notice is this literary war which it waged against the scholastic theology, and against the Jesuits in particular. The Society of Jesus had ever, to its credit, devoted itself to the education of youth; but whatever danger there was in their general teaching was thus intensified in the eyes of those who distrusted them. Port-Royal determined to meet them on this ground, by establishing schools,<sup>1</sup> and by issuing text-books of their own. The *Grammar*, *Logic*, and *Rhetoric* of Port-Royal—the first by Arnauld, the second by Nicole—were the fruits of their resolve. The Jesuits were not inert in the face of this opposition and defiance. They plotted incessantly at Rome, in order to bring the thunders of the Holy See to bear upon the over-bold Jansenists. The persecution was not without its effect: it induced Blaise Pascal to step into the arena.

Be it observed that Pascal, one of the most independent minds of his age, had never yet up to this point submitted himself to the actual guidance of Jansen, any more than he had frankly accepted the logical consequences of the discoveries of Descartes. He had felt the force of both these powerful influences; but a third feeling had exerted authority over his unwilling mind: he had been swayed by the sceptical influence of Montaigne. Was it not as a sort of refuge from the yawning abyss which had thus threatened to devour him that his staunch and devotional spirit threw him, as by a sudden and irresistible impulse, into the arms of the Jansenists, and made him a recluse at Port-Royal, and its champion against the world?

In 1642, Pope Urban VIII. had launched a bull against

<sup>1</sup> It was at one of these *petites écoles* that Racine received his early training.

the posthumous book *Augustinus* of Jansen. The bull slept ; but shortly afterwards eighty-five French bishops signed a letter to Innocent X., denouncing the principles of the Jansenists, which they summarised in five propositions : that just men could not obey the commandments of God without grace given to them ; that his grace is irresistible ; that man cannot of his own will obey or resist it ; that man has no liberty of action as distinguished from necessity ; that Christ did not die for all men, but only for the predestinated. Fifteen bishops addressed the Pope in support of the Jansenists ; but the result was that Innocent condemned the propositions in 1653. The Jesuits exulted and pressed their victory. Antoine Arnauld, who, by the way, confined himself to an attempt to prove that the propositions were not to be found in the *Augustinus*, was summoned before the Sorbonne, and condemned as a heretic ; though not before the defection from that body of sixty-six dissenting doctors. A decree was moreover obtained from the Government<sup>1</sup> closing the *petites écoles*, and depriving the sisters of Port-Royal of their scholars. It was at this crisis (1656) that the chivalrous soul of Pascal took fire, and brought him to the rescue.

He had no lack of inducements, personal as well as general, to make him identify himself more closely with the community at Port-Royal. He had many intimate friends in the monastery, including his youngest sister. His elder sister, Madame Périer, who has left us a very interesting, though not a very complete life of her brother, draws a vivid picture of the effect produced by his piety upon his family and his friends. "Even my father," she says, "not ashamed to submit to the teaching of his son, embraced from thenceforth"—she is speaking of the year 1647—"a more exact

<sup>1</sup> At this time in the hands of Anne of Austria and Cardinal Mazarin ; who accused the Jansenists of being in league with the chiefs of the Fronde. See *passim*, Martin, *Histoire de France*.



manner of life, by the continual exercise of virtue until his death, which was in every respect that of a Christian ; and my sister, who had very unusual mental abilities, and who maintained from her childhood a repute which few girls attain, was so touched by my brother's discourses, that she resolved to renounce all the advantages which she had hitherto so greatly cherished, to consecrate herself entirely to God, which she subsequently did, adopting the religious life in a very pious and very austere house"—that of Port-Royal—"where she died in sanctity on the 4th of October 1661, at the age of thirty-six.

The work in which Pascal undertook the revindication of Port-Royal was entitled *Letters from Louis de Montalte to a Friend in the Provinces, and to the Reverend Fathers the Jesuits, concerning the morality and the methods of the said Fathers*.<sup>1</sup> These *Provincial Letters*, as they are usually called, are at once an attack upon the Jesuits and a defence of the Jansenist opinions called in question by the Pope and the Sorbonne ; and their effect was fully as great as the author's most sanguine friends had anticipated. The first letter contains an ironic exaltation of the authority of the Sorbonne, "*mons parturiens*" to end at the invention of the word "next power" "*ridiculus mus*." The second letter is about "sufficient grace, in which there are two things, the sound which is only wind and the thing which it signifies." The third is about the condemnation of Arnauld, in which is the following phrase to be found : "the cleverest men are those who intrigue much, speak little, and do not write at all." In the rest of his letters, from the fourth to the nineteenth and last, he attacks the casuists, who are the Jesuits, by all the means in his power, by raillery, reasoning, passion, eloquence, and logic. All that was good and durable in the doctrine of Port-

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres de Louis de Montalte à un provincial de ses amis, et aux RR. PP. Jésuites sur la morale et la politique de ces pères.*



Royal—and this was much—became incalculably stronger by Pascal's championship, which was, in fact, almost sufficient in itself to decide the great battle for supremacy between Gallican and what we now understand by ultramontane views in the French Catholic church, and to decide this battle in a sense adverse to the Jesuits. Not, of course, definitely at the first blow ; although the victory of the *Provincial Letters* was rapid and brilliant, and the reverse of the Jesuits was logically and confessedly crushing. But the work of Pascal was immortal. He was not able to see its full results, for it has been in each successive generation, down to the present century, that his clear, severe, and convincing philosophy has reaped its triumphs. As for his literary method, the opinion of M. Victor Cousin<sup>1</sup> must necessarily be the opinion of all who read and weigh his works.

We shall give two passages from the *Provinciales*. In the first, Pascal defends truth against falsehood and intrigue :—

“That war in which violence attempts to oppress truth is peculiar and of long duration ; all the efforts of violence cannot weaken truth, and only serve to enhance it the more. All the light of truth cannot do anything to stop violence, and only irritate it more. When force combats, force the most powerful destroys the least powerful ; when we oppose speeches against speeches, those which are true and convincing confound and dispel those which are nothing but vanity and falsehood ; but violence and truth cannot act reciprocally upon one another. Nevertheless, let us not conclude from this that these things are equal ; for there is this very great difference, that violence has only a limited range by command of God, who causes its effects to be

<sup>1</sup> In a report made by him to the Academy, wherein he recommended and prepared the way for the first complete edition of the *Pensées* from the original manuscript, he says :—“The speciality of Pascal is rigour, that inflexible rigour which aims, in everything, at the utmost precision, the last degree of evidence. Hence the clear and luminous style, the firm and decided—overlaid alternately by the charm of a most amiable mind, and by the melancholy of a soul which very soon wearied of the world.”

conducive to the glory of the truth which it attacks; whilst truth exists to all eternity, and finally triumphs over its enemies, because it is eternal and powerful as God itself."<sup>1</sup>

The next passage is a most eloquent diatribe, in which we hear Pascal's indignation vibrate and break forth in defence of the nuns of Port-Royal.

"Cruel and cowardly persecutors, are the most retired cloisters not even refuges against your slanders? Whilst these holy virgins worship Jesus Christ day and night in the holy sacrament, according to their rule, you cease neither day or night to publish that they do not believe that He is in the Eucharist, nor even seated at the right hand of His Father, and you cut them off publicly from the Church whilst they pray in secret for you and for the whole Church. You slander those who have no ears to hear you, nor mouth to answer you; but Jesus Christ, in whom they are hidden in order to appear one day only with Him, hears you and answers for them. We hear this day this holy and terrible voice which astonishes nature and consoles the Church; and I fear that those who harden their hearts and who refuse obstinately to listen to Him when He speaks as a God, shall be compelled to listen to Him with terror when He shall speak to them as a judge."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> C'est une étrange et longue guerre que celle où la violence essaye d'opprimer la vérité; tous les efforts de la violence ne peuvent affaiblir la vérité, et ne servent qu'à la relever davantage. Toutes les lumières de la vérité ne peuvent rien pour arrêter la violence, et ne font que l'irriter encore plus. Quand la force combat la force, la plus puissante détruit la moindre; quand on oppose les discours aux discours, ceux qui sont véritables et convaincants confondent et dissipent ceux qui n'ont que la vanité et le mensonge; mais la violence et la vérité ne peuvent rien l'une sur l'autre. Qu'on ne prétende pas de là néanmoins que les choses soient égales; car il y a cette extrême différence, que la violence n'a qu'un cours borné par l'ordre de Dieu, qui en conduit les effets à la gloire de la vérité qu'elle attaque; au lieu que la vérité subsiste éternellement, et triomphe enfin de ses ennemis, parce qu'elle est éternelle et puissante comme Dieu même.—(*Twelfth Provinciale.*)

<sup>2</sup> Cruels et lâches persécuteurs, faut-il donc que les cloîtres les plus retirés ne soient pas des asiles contre vos calomnies? Pendant que ces saintes vierges adorent nuit et jour Jésus-Christ au saint-sacrement, selon leur institution, vous ne cessez nuit et jour de publier qu'elles ne croient pas qu'il soit

Let us content ourselves with a single brief extract from the posthumous volume of his *Thoughts*, published by the bereaved friends of the thinker, with this apt and laconic inscription : *Pendent interrupta.*

"Let man regard the universe of nature in its full and lofty majesty ; let him carry his sight far beyond the petty objects which surround him ; let him behold that brilliant light set like an eternal lamp to enlighten the universe ; let the world seem to him as a point in comparison with the vast orbit which the sun describes,<sup>1</sup> and let him think with wonder that this vast orbit itself is but an insignificant point compared with that which is embraced by the stars revolving in the firmament. But if our sight is here arrested, let the imagination pass beyond ; it will weary of its conceptions before nature wearies of her facts. The whole visible world is an imperceptible spot in the ample bosom of nature. No idea can approach it. In vain do we expand our conceptions beyond imaginable space ; we produce but atoms in comparison with the reality of things. It is an infinite sphere, whose centre is everywhere, its circumference nowhere.<sup>2</sup> This, in short, is the most intelligible evidence of the omnipotence of God, that our imagination should be lost in such a thought. Returning to himself, let man consider what he is in comparison with what is ; let him regard himself as lost in this remote cor-

ni dans l'eucharistie, ni même à la droite de son Père, et vous les retranchez publiquement de l'église pendant qu'elles prient dans le secret pour vous et pour toute l'église. Vous calomniez celles qui n'ont point d'oreilles pour vous ouïr, ni de bouche pour vous répondre ; mais Jesus-Christ en qui elles sont cachées, pour ne paraître qu'un jour avec lui, vous écoute et répond pour elles. On l'entend aujourd'hui cette voix sainte et terrible qui étonne la nature et qui console l'Eglise ; et je crains que ceux qui endurcissent leurs cœurs et qui refusent avec opiniâtreté de l'ouïr quand il parle en Dieu, ne soient forcés de l'ouïr avec effroi quand il leur parlera en juge."

<sup>1</sup> Again be it remembered that Pascal had not accepted, if at this time he had heard of the conclusions of Galileo.

<sup>2</sup> According to Vincent de Beauvais (1190-1264) in his *Speculum Historiale*, Empedocles had said : *Deus est sphaera, cujus centrum ubique, circumferentia nusquam.* Rabelais (*Pantagruel*, book iii. ch. 13) and Mademoiselle de Gournay, the adopted daughter of Montaigne, ascribe this definition to Hermes Trismegistus.

ner of nature, and in this petty prison wherein he is confined—I mean the universe—let him learn to value the earth, kingdoms, cities, himself, at their due worth.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Que l’homme contemple donc la nature entière dans sa haute et pleine majesté ; qu’il éloigne sa vue des objets bas qui l’environnent ; qu’il regarde cette éclatante lumière mise comme une lampe éternelle pour éclairer l’univers ; que la terre lui paraisse comme un point, au prix du vaste tour que cet astre décrit, et qu’il s’étonne de ce que ce vaste tour lui-même n’est qu’un point très-délicat, à l’égard de celui que les astres qui roulent dans le firmament embrassent. Mais si notre vue s’arrête là, que l’imagination passe outre : elle se lassera plus tôt de concevoir que la nature de fournir. Tout ce monde visible n’est qu’un trait imperceptible dans l’ample sein de la nature. Nulle idée n’en approche. Nous avons beau enfler nos conceptions au delà des espaces imaginables, nous n’enfantons que des atomes, au prix de la réalité des choses. C’est une sphère infinie dont le centre est partout, la circonférence nulle part. Enfin, c’est le plus grand caractère sensible de la toute-puissance de Dieu, que notre imagination se perde dans cette pensée. Que l’homme, étant revenu à soi, considère ce qu’il est au prix de ce qui est ; qu’il se regarde comme égaré dans ce canton détourné de la nature, et que, de ce petit cachot où il se trouve logé, j’entends l’univers, il apprenne à estimer la terre, les royaumes, les villes et soi-même son juste prix.”

## CHAPTER VII.

## § 1. THE FRONDE.

A REMARKABLE fact stands out in the social and literary history of the seventeenth century, which, in its very first decade, introduces an epoch of refinement and luxury, the natural issue of the Renaissance, and all the more splendid for its late appearance. The long civil wars had disorganised society in France from the top to the bottom. With many conspicuous exceptions, the courts of Henry IV. and Louis XIII. were as dissolute as any which succeeded them. Apart from open or concealed licentiousness of life, the nation had received a moral twist from its religious bitterness, which displayed itself as much in politics and diplomacy as in literature and social life. The examples of the highest classes produced their natural effect upon the lower; or rather the same causes produced a simultaneous effect, under different conditions, upon every section of the community. Prominent amongst the leaders of fashionable vice and recklessness of conduct, with their inseparable concomitant in the case of the least cultivated classes—coarseness of manners, were women so highly placed, and so necessarily influential, as Catherine de Medici, Mary de Medici, and, most dissolute of the three, Marguerite de Valois. It was impossible that the example of these three queens should not have given a powerful impulse to the moral degradation of Frenchmen; and it was a strange compensation of fate, not



in itself unnatural, that a countrywoman of two of the three, Catherine de Vivonne, Marquise de Rambouillet, should be the instrument whereby a partial regeneration of society was to be effected.

This regeneration is a remarkable fact; but its significance would not be fully discerned if we failed to notice the deep colours wherein is drawn the contrast between the luxury and splendour of the society of which the hôtel de Rambouillet was the centre, and the terrible excess of misery in which the lower orders of Frenchmen, especially at the time of the Fronde, were simultaneously plunged. No pencil could be too graphic to paint this curse of France, the legacy of the League, from which, aggravated as it was by a long series of extortionate taxations, the unhappy country never entirely recovered until the days of the Revolution. From the very commencement of the seventeenth century the records of wide-spread ruin, of penury and famine, of wretchedness and its attendant crime, are heartrending in the extreme; and the exasperation of all these evils which, towards the middle of the same century, created the outbreak of the Fronde, and raised up such examples of heroic self-devotion as Saint Vincent de Paul, produced a phenomenon the ghastliness of which is not surpassed in the annals of any other country. The works of contemporary French artists—of Callot and his fellow-engravers in particular—present the most vivid and painful idea of the condition to which France, at its weakest, was reduced. “Even<sup>1</sup> in his own country Callot had had frequent instances of the revolutions of fortune which resulted in a life of Bohemianism: several noblemen in Lorraine had come to beg at the knees of Saint Vincent de Paul’s missionaries; their wives and daughters bartered their honour for a piece of bread, if the alms were too long in reaching them. Misery had already

<sup>1</sup> Alphonse Feillet, *La Misère au temps de la Fronde*, ch. i.

given them the vices which she too often carries with her ; victims of violence and injustice, they will in their turn make others submit to them. Seeing their hollow looks, the exhausted frames of the women, the children dying of hunger, very phantoms in human garb, we are no longer astonished to find plunder organised amongst them." It would be an endless task, and fortunately for our present purpose it is an unnecessary one, to wade through the sickening details of this national misery.

The product of this desperate condition of the country was the wars of the Fronde, an insurrection of the Parliaments and the Third-Estate, which began in Paris and spread rapidly through the country, involving in its progress a considerable section of the French nobility. Antetype of the Revolution of 1789, with which in its earlier stages it had much in common,<sup>1</sup> both as regards its causes and its processes, it has attracted the closest attention of subsequent historians, and is not without its direct bearing upon the history of French literature. Hardly any district in France, especially in the northern, eastern, and southern provinces, was free from this insurrectionary Nemesis, the spawn of civil war. The great cities throughout the land rose one after another, declaring for a cause which they might have found it difficult to define ; whilst the queen, her court and her counsellors, barricaded themselves in the capital which they had only strategically and for a short time abandoned. All this overturning of the social fabric could not but find its reflection in the literature of the day ; and in fact it found it, more than once, in a sufficiently curious and even ridiculous

<sup>1</sup> The flight from Paris of Anne of Austria and her two children (January 6, 1649), the seizing of the Bastille, the command of the military forces in the city by citizen-officers, the impeachment of Mazarin, the adhesion to the Parliamentary party of men like the Prince de Conti and the Duke de Longueville, are amongst the features of what might be made to appear a striking historical parallel.

manner. Pamphlets and engravings, issued principally in Paris, enable us to see with wonderful clearness the shadow cast by this portentous outbreak of long-smothered passions upon the mind of the generation. The prints and squibs of this period, known under the generic name of *Mazarinades*, form in themselves an intellectual history, tolerably complete, of the Fronde, and more particularly of the Fronde as it was seen and experienced in Paris. One engraving represents the Fronde as a vessel in which are the best-known leaders of the insurrectionary movement; in the sea are Mazarin and his friends, checking the course of the ship with contrary winds, and on the other side Marshal d'Ancre, an anchor in his hands, with which he is endeavouring to sink "the Fronde." The engraving appeared early in the year 1648, whilst the queen and her court were at Saint Germain; and above it is this device: "The safety of France in the arms of Paris." The inevitable spirit of satire extends to the pamphlets; and, in default of satire, buffoonery. One of them, written by a captain of militia, not yet, it may be supposed, having received his baptism of fire, selects the motto of the League: "One God, one faith, one king, one law;" and he indulges in braggadocio of this kind: "We have given orders to all our soldiers to carry boots, so that the blood of those whom we are about to kill (which will run in streams), may not get into our shoes." A graver tone is of course not lacking here and there, "O sweet war!" cries one, "O fine war for the scoundrel and the pickpocket! O sad war for the citizen shut up like a prisoner in his city! O rude war for the shopkeeper met with in the open country! and above all, O cruel war for the oxen, cows and sheep, for more than six leagues round."<sup>1</sup> Valuable contributions to the secret history of the time are to be found in the letters of Mère Angélique, of Port-Royal; in the *Recueil* of the advocate

<sup>1</sup> 1621-1689.

Lehault,<sup>1</sup> and in many other letters, journals, and official documents of the period, which have been at various times brought to light.

It is against such a background that we have to examine the condition of high society and polite literature in Paris, during the first half of the seventeenth century. With this undercurrent of misery in our minds we must make acquaintance with the luxurious assemblies of the hôtel de Rambouillet, and the refined intercourse of the *précieux* and *précieuses*.

## § 2. THE HÔTEL DE RAMBOUILLET.

Bright indeed is the contrast when we turn from the melancholy annals of the Fronde, and of the troubles which gave rise to it, to the pure, if unnatural life and character of Catherine de Vivonne,<sup>2</sup> the young and noble-minded wife of the Marquis de Rambouillet. The daughter of an Italian mother, married at a very early age, and brought suddenly amidst the gaiety and the license of the court of Henry IV., a mother before she was twenty, her mind speedily recoiled from the gilded hollowness of a society which had so few charms for her. She retired, about the year 1608, to her husband's private house, and was at once sought out by admirers as distinguished as Malherbe and Racan. It is probable that before this time the latter's *Bergeries*, d'Urfé's *Astrée*, and the other works of the pastoral school, had produced a lasting effect upon her impressible mind; and she may have conceived the idea of creating in the midst of the gay capital an oasis of romance such as these poems and stories had taught her to covet. And as she felt her influence

<sup>1</sup> Alphonse Feillet, *La Misère au temps de la Fronde*, ch. 2.

<sup>2</sup> 1588-1665.



increase, and saw that the best literary men, the purest and most refined women, preferred her house to the salons of the king and the cardinal, she doubtless became fired with the ambition of holding her court in perpetuity. Such *réunions* as the marquise held night after night, first in her husband's old hôtel, and subsequently in a grand and elegant furnished mansion for which she herself had supplied the design,<sup>1</sup> were very rare, if not hitherto unknown in Parisian society. Be that as it may, we must regard Madame de Rambouillet as the pioneer of her countrywomen in the fashion of elegant entertainments, which became, a little later, one of the most characteristic features of Parisian life, and which has been specially immortalised in the plays of Molière.

The influence of woman on literature was to be henceforth one of the great constraining powers in France; and it has been almost always, as it was beyond question in this instance, a power exerted for good. The democracy of letters profited immeasurably by the happy idea which made Catherine de Vivonne the cynosure of literary Parisians. "At the hôtel de Rambouillet all men of wit were received, whatever may have been their social status; all that was asked of them was that they should be well-mannered; but the aristocratic tone was established there without effort, most of the guests being very grand lords, and the mistress being at once a Rambouillet and a Vivonne." Arthénice—as Malherbe transposed the letters of her name—was in reality a queen, more powerful in the sway which she loved to exercise over her subject than either Mary de Medicis or Anne of Austria. This sway, moreover, was light and easy; her courtiers were all like-minded with herself, all anxious to maintain the dignity and glory of the reign under which they lived, and all obedient to the nod of the monarch—or

<sup>1</sup> In 1613; see V. Cousin, *Madame de Sablé*, 1854, p. 53.



rather, as she was habitually called, the goddess whom they served.

Amongst the earliest favourites of the marquise, in addition to Malherbe and Racan, was Cospeau<sup>1</sup>, who had been Richelieu's tutor, a grave and eloquent preacher, well advanced in years, like the two poets, but not on this account less acceptable to his young and discriminating hostess. After these came Chapelain,<sup>2</sup> the future author of *La Pucelle*; a subject which might well create an epic poet in a nation whose literary genius was not wholly inapt for the epic vein, but which, like Ronsard's *La Franciade*, proved a dreary failure; though Chapelain was a good scholar, and as a critic deserves more of his country by his judgment of others than by the fruits of his own commerce with the muses; Gombauld,<sup>3</sup> the author of a poem called *Endymion*, in which he was supposed to have depicted his love for the queen; the Italian Marini,<sup>4</sup> who wrote *Adonis*, dedicated to Louis XIII., to which Chapelain prefixed a laudatory introduction; Voiture;<sup>5</sup> Conrart;<sup>6</sup> Godeau,<sup>7</sup> who for his diminutive size was called "Julie's Dwarf," and who, through the favour of the marquise, was afterwards promoted to a bishopric; the diminutive Marquis du Vigean; the Marshal de Souvré,<sup>8</sup> and his daughter, the well-known Marquise de Sablé;<sup>9</sup> the Duke<sup>10</sup> and Duchess de la Trimouille;<sup>11</sup> and the young bishop of Luçon, afterwards the Cardinal de Richelieu.<sup>12</sup> Amongst the ladies came Madame Aubry; a friend and correspondent of Voiture's, Mademoiselle Paulet; these two endowed with excellent voices, with which they were wont to add to the charms of the hôtel de Rambouillet; Madame Saintot; the princess de Montmorency;<sup>13</sup> and Anne de Bourbon,<sup>14</sup> afterwards the

<sup>1</sup> 1568-1646.

<sup>2</sup> 1595-1674.

<sup>3</sup> 1570-1666.

<sup>4</sup> 1569-1625.

<sup>5</sup> 1598-1648.

<sup>6</sup> 1603-1675.

<sup>7</sup> 1605-1672.

<sup>8</sup> 1542-1626.

<sup>9</sup> 1598-1678.

<sup>10</sup> 1620-1672.

<sup>11</sup> The Duchess was a Princess Amelia of Hesse Cassel.

<sup>12</sup> 1585-1642.

<sup>13</sup> 1594-1650.

<sup>14</sup> 1619-1679.

Duchess de Longueville. The daughters of the marquise, again, contributed in no small degree to the pleasure of their mother's guests, and the eldest of them, Julie d'Angennes,<sup>1</sup> was destined to succeed to her mother's honours and influence.

The elegance of the hôtel de Rambouillet, the refinement of its hosts and guests, were enhanced by the kindness, the good humour, and the gaiety of all who lived in and frequented it. Endless are the anecdotes narrated by Voiture, by the Marquis de Rambouillet, and others of the *habitues* of the hotel, who have left us in their letters and journals a record of all that passed before their eyes. The mutual affection and devotion of the household itself are especially touching. On one occasion the second son of the marquise was attacked by the plague. She sent the servants away, and tended the boy herself, alone with him until his death, save for her eldest daughter, whom she could not induce to leave her. It was Julie also who nursed the Duchess de Longueville through the small-pox, when all her other friends had fled in terror. The pretty archness and practical joking of this society of friends was as kindly in its intention as it was always gracefully endured. The Count de Guiche,<sup>2</sup> afterwards Duke de Gramont, seems to have been a favourite butt. On his first introduction by M. de Chaudebonne he was entertained by the marquise, who knew his epicurean taste, with a spare and altogether uneatable repast; but his thorough breeding and good humour under the infliction was rewarded by the most *recherché* of suppers, the cooking of which had been timed about half-an-hour after that of the other. The mistress of the house in which was found so much genuine purity and virtue, so much wit and gaiety, so much kindliness and refinement, deserves the character given of her in his *Historiettes* by Tallemant des Réaux,<sup>3</sup> whose pen spares few

<sup>1</sup> 1607-1671.<sup>2</sup> 1604-1678.<sup>3</sup> 1619-1692.

of those whom it takes upon itself to describe. "Madame de Rambouillet," says this gossip-monger of the seventeenth century, "was admirable; she was good, gentle, beneficent, modest, warm-hearted, of a noble spirit; she it was who corrected the evil manners then in vogue."

Mademoiselle de Rambouillet was married to the Marquis de Montausier,<sup>1</sup> who left Paris when the troubles of the Fronde began to thicken within and without the city. Her mother was then in feeble health; and the brilliant circle was for a time overshadowed. The civil war concluded, Madame de Montausier returned, and once more the glories of the hôtel de Rambouillet revived. But the first charm had departed, or, at all events, it was changed for a charm more artificial, and the refinement which had attracted all Paris began to give place to an affectation at which almost all Paris laughed. It was only towards the close of Madame de Rambouillet's life that her school of manners and of literature deserved the name of *précieuse*. Molière, who slew it with his ridicule, was well able to discriminate between the diamond and the paste. In the preface of his *Précieuses Ridicules*, he says, after humourously complaining that his play was being printed in too great a hurry: "I cannot so much as obtain the liberty of speaking two words to justify my intention as to the subject of this comedy: I would willingly have shown that it is confined throughout within the bounds of allowable and decent satire, that things the most excellent are liable to be mimicked by wretched apes, who deserve to be ridiculed; that these absurd imitations of what is most perfect have been at all times the subject of comedy . . . the true *précieuses* would be in the wrong to be angry when the pretentious ones are exposed who imitate them awkwardly." It was not Madame de Rambouillet and her daughter, nor such as their later adherents,

<sup>1</sup> 1610-1690.

as Mademoiselle de Scudéry,<sup>1</sup> and Madame de Sévigné,<sup>2</sup> whom the great satirist desired to ridicule in the characters of Madelon and Cathos, but only the glib dealers in an easily affected phraseology, who turned the purism of Malherbe, Racan, and Voiture, into a ridiculous jargon, just as the imitators of the English purists, who misconceived and abused the really dignified style of Lyly, gave birth to the nonsensical euphuism which Sir Walter Scott has embalmed in Sir Piercie Shafton.

Julie de Montausier, was a favourite retailer of romances, in a vein which drew its wealth from the stories of d'Urfé;<sup>3</sup> and Voiture, who loved to listen to her, gives us a charming specimen in his *Alcidalis et Zelide*, the idea of which he took from her mouth. But the great romancist of the set was Mademoiselle de Scudéry, whose novels supplied the later *précieuses* with their art of love, their code of manners and sentiments. *Le Grand Cyrus* and *Clelie* are conceived in the full flavour of the spirit which governed the hôtel de Rambouillet before its earlier glories had faded; their principal merit consists in the speaking likenesses which they draw of the leading spirits in this assembly of wits. The last of the ten long-winded volumes of *Clelie* appeared in the year of the Marquise de Rambouillet's death; the date of the first volume is 1654; that is, it covers the latest and least wholesome phase of the *coterie*. It is in the first portion of the work that the map of the country of Tenderness is introduced.

According to this love-chart there are in the country of Tenderness three rivers—Inclination, Esteem, and Gratitude. If any one wishes to go from the town New Friendship to the city of Tenderness, near the river Esteem, he has to tra-

<sup>1</sup> 1607-1701.

<sup>2</sup> 1626-1696.

<sup>3</sup> It is true that Roederer, in his exhaustive *Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire de la société polie*, 1835, considers that *Astrée* was not in favour with the marquise and her friends; though his reasons are indirect, and certainly not conclusive.

verse the villages Great Wit, Charming Verse, Love-Letters, Sincerity, Noble Heart, and many more with similar names. But if the traveller loses his way and strays to the village Negligence, he will fall into the lake of Indifference ; and if he strays to the left, he may, after having gone through the villages of Indiscretion, Perfidy, Pride, Slander, and Wickedness, be finally drowned in the sea of Enmity. This is no unfair example of the manner and treatment of Mademoiselle de Scudéry's romances. The spirit which had ended in such a perversion of taste and common sense had long ago completed its useful task, but at last it stood self-condemned, and the iconoclast was at hand to do for the affectations of Paris what Cervantes had done for those of Madrid. "I was present," says Ménage,<sup>1</sup> "at the first representation of *les Précieuses Ridicules* (1659) at the Theatre du Petit Bourbon. Madame de Rambouillet was there, also M. Chapelain, and almost all the hôtel de Rambouillet. The piece was played amidst general applause, and I was satisfied with it on my own part, as I saw the effect which it was going to produce. In leaving the theatre I took M. Chapelain by the hand, and said to him, 'You and I approve this folly which has just been criticised so cleverly and with such good sense, but, believe me, to use the words of St. Remi to Clovis, We must burn what we have adored, and adore what we have burned.' It has happened as I predicted, and from that first representation we have turned back from fustian and swollen style."

We must not omit to mention what may perhaps be considered as the best literary outcome of the hôtel de Rambouillet, apart, of course, from the letters and memoirs in which its history is recorded. The *Guirlande de Julie*<sup>2</sup> con-

<sup>1</sup> 1603-1692.

<sup>2</sup> See *Poètes de Ruelles au XVII<sup>e</sup>. Siècle : La Guirlande de Julie*, ed. Octave Uzanne, which contains a complete history of this Garland.



sisted of an album of verses, composed in honour of Julie d'Angennes, at the instance of the Marquis de Montausier, during the weary years of his protracted courtship. Even after the presentation of the *Guirlande* (1641) he had to wait four years more, and married at last his beloved Julie (1645) when she was thirty-eight years old, and after he had abjured the Protestant religion to become a Roman Catholic. On each page of the album was painted a flower, with one or more madrigals inscribed beneath it. The devoted lover himself wrote sixteen; Voiture and Racan are conspicuous by their absence.<sup>1</sup> The poems were engrossed by a noted calligrapher, Nicolas Jarry, who produced three copies in the year of its first appearance. Of the copy presented to the lady herself the first three leaves were blank, the fourth held the title, the fifth was illustrated by a painted garland of flowers, the sixth was blank, the seventh contained a medallion representing Zephyr surrounded by a mist, holding in his right hand a rose and in his left a garland of flowers. Upon the eighth page was the florid dedication of the work by its gallant instigator, under the title "Zephyr to Julie." "Madrigal :—

"Receive, O adorable nymph,  
From whom our hearts receive their laws,  
This more enduring crown  
Than that which we place upon the head of kings.  
The flowers from which my hand has woven it  
Outshine the golden flowers seen in the sky ;  
The water wherewith Parnassus bathes them  
Gives them an everlasting freshness ;  
And every day my fair Flora,

<sup>1</sup> The other writers were Arnauld d'Andilly, father and son, de Corbeville, de Briotte, Chapelain, Colletet, Corneille, Desmarets, Godeau, Gombauld, Habert de Montmort, Habert de Cérisy, a third Habert, *commissaire* in the artillery, Malleville, Martin de Pinchesne, Scudéry, Tallemant des Réaux, and the Marquis of Rambouillet.

Who loves me and whom I adore,  
 Angrily reproaches me,  
 That my sighs never for her  
 Produce a flower so beautiful  
 As I have produced for you." <sup>1</sup>

*Julie's Garland*, as we have said, was not contributed to by Racan and Voiture, although these were amongst the most habitual frequenters of the hôtel de Rambouillet. Why the first did not write some poetical compliment is not known, but the second was probably excluded by jealousy, both on his own part and on that of the Marquis de Montausier. The "great letter-writer," as he was generally called, took, however, later his revenge, by addressing numerous letters and verses to Mademoiselle de Rambouillet.<sup>2</sup> It would seem, too, that Voiture's manners were not so invariably polished as to save him from the criticism of his more refined associates; at all events he was a man who had started in life with less advantage in this respect than the majority of them. Tallemant des Réaux, one of the circle, and who was called the *calomniographe* of his age, relates how M. de Chaudebonne, happening to meet Voiture at the house of a mutual friend, said to him,

<sup>1</sup> "Recevez, ô nymphe adorable,  
 Dont les cœurs reçoivent les loix,  
 Cette couronne plus durable  
 Que celle que l'on met sur la tête des roys.  
 Les fleurs dont ma main la compose  
 Font honte à ces fleurs d'or qu'on voit au firmament.  
 L'eau dont Parmesse les arrose  
 Leur donne une fraîcheur qui dure incessamment;  
 Et tous les jours ma belle Flore,  
 Qui me chérit et que j'adore,  
 Me reproche avecque courroux  
 Que mes soupirs jamais pour elle  
 N'ont fait naistre de fleur si belle  
 Que j'en ai fait naistre pour vous."

<sup>2</sup> "Quand les dieux eurent fait  
 Le chef d'œuvre parfait  
 Que *Julie* on appelle,  
 Minerve qui la vit  
 En pleura de dépit,  
 Et se trouva moins belle."

"Sir, you are too polished a man to remain in the bourgeoisie ; I must withdraw you from it." It was some time after this before the clever but blunt and indiscreet man was received at the Marquise de Rambouillet's assemblies. There he was rude more or less to Julie d'Angennes, to Mademoiselle Paulet, and to several others, until he was at last in sufficiently bad odour all round. His companions composed for him a sort of round-robin of satire, in which he was somewhat hardly used, and which has been preserved by Tallemant des Réaux in his *New Collection of the Finest Poems*.<sup>1</sup> Voiture complains, not very bitterly, of this *jeu d'esprit* in a letter to his friend Costar.<sup>2</sup> "I send you," he says, "some verses which have been made against me, in which Voiture is rhymed with *roture*. . . . I have a good mind to show this precious poem to M. Chapelain."

Two ladies of the court of Madame de Rambouillet, who had both been the pupils of Chapelain and Ménage, and who have both left behind them works of considerable literary merit, deserve to be specially noticed here, although they lived far into the reign of Louis XIV. ; Madame de Sévigné,<sup>3</sup> grand-daughter of Madame de Chantal, formerly mentioned,<sup>4</sup> and Madame de la Fayette.<sup>5</sup> Left a widow at the age of twenty-five, Madame de Sévigné devoted herself simultaneously to the care of her children and to intellectual pursuits. The evidences of her wit, her sprightly criticism, her learning, and her literary appreciation, are preserved in a

<sup>1</sup> Paris, 1659.  
 "Je voudrais bien rimer en *ture*,  
 Pour descrire Monsieur de Voiture . .  
 Quoiqu'il ait fort peu de lecture,  
 C'est un vray diable en *escriture*,  
 En vers, prose et littérature ;  
 C'est un Alexandre en *peinture* ;

C'est un Démosthène en sculpture,  
 Un Caton en architecture . . .  
 Du Cercle il sait la quadrature . . .  
 C'est une aimable créature,  
 Si sa race estoit sans rature  
 Et sa naissance sans *roture*."

<sup>2</sup> *Les Entretiens de M. de Voiture et de M. de Costar*, Paris, 1654, p. 460. Chapelain was another *roturier*.

<sup>3</sup> 1626-1696.

<sup>4</sup> See bk. iv. ch. 6, p. 133.

<sup>5</sup> 1634-1693.

number of very entertaining letters. Almost all of them are well written, lively, and gossipy, and those to her married daughter, Madame de Grignan, bear proof of great critical acumen and a rather over-motherly affection. They have been much read and esteemed in each succeeding generation. The force of her talent may be gauged by a single expression in one of these letters, where she recommends the reading of serious books. "It gives," she says, "a sombre hue to the mind, to lack pleasure in solid reading." Let us take a larger specimen of the style and manner of these sparkling little sallies, in which, to use her own words, she suffers her pen "to amble with the reins upon its neck."

"I am about to make you acquainted with a circumstance the most astonishing, the most surprising, the most marvellous, the most miraculous, the most triumphant, the most astounding, the most unheard of, the most singular, the most extraordinary, the most incredible, the most unforeseen, the most grand, the most petty, the most rare, the most commonplace, the most notorious, the most secret up to the present moment, the most brilliant, the most enviable ; in short a circumstance of which but one example is to be found in past ages, an example, however, which is not precisely the same ; a circumstance which we could not believe in Paris, so how could they believe it at Lyons ? a circumstance which makes all the world cry out, ' wonderful ! ' a circumstance which fills Madame de Rohan and Madame de Hauterive with joy ; a circumstance, in short, which will take place on Sunday, at which those who look on will fancy they are subject to a hallucination, a circumstance which will take place on Sunday, and which will perhaps not take place on Monday. I can't make up my mind to tell it : guess what it is. I give you three tries : do you give it up ? Well ! I must tell you then. M. de Lauzun marries on Sunday, at the Louvre, guess whom ? I give you ten tries : I give you a hundred. Madame de Coulanges says : It is very hard to guess ; it is Mademoiselle de la Vallière ? By no means, Madame. Then it is Mademoiselle de Retz ? Not at all, you are very countryfied. Verily, say you, we are vastly



stupid ; it must be Mademoiselle de Créquy. You have not got it ; then to make an end of it, I must tell you. He marries, with the King's permission, Mademoiselle . . . Mademoiselle de . . . Mademoiselle. . . . Guess the name ; he marries Mademoiselle ; my word, upon my word, my sacred word, Mademoiselle, the great Mademoiselle ; Mademoiselle, daughter of Monsieur deceased ; Mademoiselle, grand-daughter of Henry IV. ; Mademoiselle d'Eu, Mademoiselle de Dombes, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, Mademoiselle d'Orleans,<sup>1</sup> Mademoiselle cousin-german of the King, Mademoiselle, destined for a throne, Mademoiselle, the only match in France which could be worthy of that gentleman."<sup>2</sup>

Madame de la Vergne, Countess de la Fayette, whom Rochefoucauld describes as "the most genuine person in the world," was eight years younger than Madame de Sévigné, and was only twenty-one at the death of Madame de Rambouillet. Her first work was printed five years before the latter's death, under the title of *The Princess de Montpensier*. Her chief talent was in romantic biography, and she left behind her two books containing the ripest fruit of her well-trained and judicious mind, *History of Henrietta of England*, and *Memoirs*

<sup>1</sup> All these were the titles of Mademoiselle de Montpensier (1627-1693), daughter of Gaston of Orléans, generally called "Monsieur," younger brother of Louis XIII. She did not marry Lauzun (1633-1723) then (1669), but probably about ten years later, and secretly. In order to obtain Louis XIV.'s permission and the freedom of her lover, who had been ten years imprisoned, she had to abandon to the Duke of Maine, one of the legitimised bastards of the king, the county of Eu, the duchy of Aumale, and the principality of Dombes.

<sup>2</sup> "Je m'en vais vous mander la chose la plus étonnante, la plus surprenante, la plus merveilleuse, la plus miraculeuse, la plus triomphante, la plus étourdissante, la plus inouïe, la plus singulière, la plus extraordinaire, la plus incroyable, la plus imprévue, la plus grande, la plus petite, la plus rare, la plus commune, la plus éclatante, la plus secrète jusqu'aujourd'hui, la plus brillante, la plus digne d'envie ; enfin, une chose dont on ne trouve qu'un exemple dans les siècles passés, encore cet exemple n'est-il pas juste : une chose que nous ne saurions croire à Paris, comment la pourrait-on croire à Lyon ? une chose qui fait crier miséricorde à tout le monde, une chose qui comble de joie M<sup>me</sup> de Rohan et M<sup>me</sup> de Hauterive ; une chose enfin, qui se fera dimanche, où ceux qui la verront croiront avoir la berlue ; une chose qui



of the Court of France during the years 1688 and 1689. In the meantime she had published *Zayde*, a Spanish tale, and *The Princess of Cleves*, the story of an honest married woman in love with another man than her husband ; both short novels told in a charming, delicate, and attractive manner. Though her style is correct, and even sometimes eloquent, and though she writes carefully and precisely of what she has seen, it is not easy to assent to the eulogy which Boileau passes upon her when he calls her " the woman of all France who had the most wit and who wrote the best."

### § 3. LITERARY COTERIES.

After the death of Madame de Rambouillet the sway of fashion and letters in France may be said to have been transferred to Mademoiselle de Scudéry, whose " Saturday Receptions " almost rivalled the brightest assemblies of Arthénice. But affectation reigned supreme in the house of the authoress of *Clélie*. All who frequented it had assumed names chosen

se fera dimanche, et qui ne sera peut-être pas faite lundi ; je ne puis me résoudre à la dire, devinez-la, je vous le donne en trois : jetez-vous votre langue aux chiens ? Hé bien ! il faut donc vous la dire, M. de Lauzun épouse, dimanche, au Louvre, devinez qui ? Je vous le donne en dix ; je vous le donne en cent. Mme de Coulanges dit : Voilà qui est bien difficile à deviner ; c'est Mlle de La Vallière. Point du tout, madame. C'est donc Mlle de Retz ? Point du tout, vous êtes bien provinciale. Vraiment, nous sommes bien bêtes, dites-vous : c'est assurément Mlle de Créquy. Vous n'y êtes pas : il faut donc à la fin vous le dire. Il épouse, avec la permission du Roi, mademoiselle . . . mademoiselle de . . . mademoiselle . . . devinez le nom ; il épouse Mademoiselle ; ma foi, par ma foi, ma foi jurée, Mademoiselle, la grande Mademoiselle ; Mademoiselle, fille de feu Monsieur ; Mademoiselle, petite-fille de Henri IV. ; Mademoiselle d'Eu, Mademoiselle de Dombes, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, Mademoiselle d'Orléans, Mademoiselle cousine-germaine du Roi, Mademoiselle destinée au trône, Mademoiselle, le seul parti de France qui fût digne de Monsieur."

for the most part from the romances of the day. The hostess herself was known as Sappho, Sarasin<sup>1</sup> was Polyandre, Conrart was Théodamas, Pellisson<sup>2</sup> was Acanthe, or *le Chroniqueur*, because he was charged with immortalising the annals of the *coterie*. Ysarn<sup>3</sup> was Zénocrate, Godeau, who at the hôtel de Rambouillet had been "Julie's dwarf," was here dignified under the name of the Magus of Sidon, or the Magus of Tendre. The wit of these *réunions* was often very sparkling and well sustained; but if the spirit or invention of the company failed, they had a ready resource in the dressing of two dolls, the great and the little Pandora, who governed with inexorable authority the fashions of elegant Paris. An account of one of these evenings, the 20th December 1653, represents the inhabitants of the *pays du Tendre* at their best. Conrart had brought for Mademoiselle de Scudéry a crystal seal, accompanied by a madrigal; and with little delay the mistress of the house produced the following reply:—

"To merit such a pretty seal,  
So well cut, so bright, so polished,  
Methinks we ought to possess  
Some pretty secret together;  
For indeed pretty seals  
Demand pretty secrets,  
Or at least pretty notes;  
But as I know not how to make these,  
As I have nought whereon to be secret,  
Or worthy of such a mystery,  
I must simply tell you  
That you make presents so gallantly

<sup>1</sup> 1605-1654.

<sup>2</sup> 1624-1693. Pellisson was a faithful friend of Fouquet, became from a Protestant a Roman Catholic, took orders, obtained rich benefices, and was called the king's *convertisseur*.

<sup>3</sup> 1637-1673. He is the author of *The Speaking Pistole*.

That one cannot refuse  
To give you one's heart, or suffer it to be taken." <sup>1</sup>

The effect of the impromptu was instantaneous; the whole evening afterwards was consumed in the production of madrigals, which exist to this day, and which bear witness to the affectation of literary cultivation among the degenerate *précieux* and *précieuses* of the seventeenth century. In her old age Mademoiselle was visited by an Englishman, Dr. Martin Lister,<sup>2</sup> who says of her: "Among the persons of distinction and fame, I was desirous to see Mademoiselle de Scudéry, now 91 years of age. Her mind is yet vigorous, though her body is in ruins. I confess this visit was a perfect mortification, to see the sad decays of nature in a woman once so famous. To hear her talk, with her lips hanging about a toothless mouth, and not to be able to command her words from flying about at random, puts me in mind of the sibyl's uttering oracles. . . . In her closet she showed me an original of Madame Maintenon, her old friend and acquaintance, which she affirmed was very like her; and indeed she was then very beautiful."

It was an age of literary extravagance, as well as of great

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|---|--|
| <p><sup>1</sup> " Pour mériter un cachet si joli,<br/>Si bien gravé, si brillant, si<br/>poli,<br/>Il faudrait avoir, ce me semble,<br/>Quelque joli secret ensemble;<br/>Car enfin les jolis cachets<br/>Demandent de jolis secrets,<br/>Ou du moins de jolis billets;</p> | <p>Mais comme je n'en sais point faire,<br/>Que je n'ai rien qu'il faille taire,<br/>Ou qui mérite aucun mystère,<br/>Il faut vous dire seulement<br/>Que vous donnez si galamment<br/>Qu'on ne peut se défendre<br/>De vous donner son coeur ou de le<br/>laisser prendre."</p> |
|---|--|

Polite gallantry might very safely proceed to this length in the *pays du Tendre*. Mademoiselle had already said to Pellisson—

" Enfin, Acanthe, il faut se rendre;  
Votre esprit a charmé le mien:  
Je vous fais citoyen de *Tendre*  
Mais, de grâce, n'en dites rien."

<sup>2</sup> See Dr. Martin's Lister's *A Journey to Paris in the year 1698*.

culture—an extravagance in more than one or two aspects, when every day produced some ridiculous epigrams, anagrams, *bouts-rimés*,<sup>1</sup> monorimes, protean verses, and a dozen other ingenious trifles of Ménage and his less known friends, amongst whom Commire, Boivin, Faydit, may be simply named before we pass on. The *bouts-rimés* are, however, sufficiently in vogue, even in our own days, to induce us to quote an account of their origin. "One day," Ménage tells us, "Dulot was complaining, in the company of several persons, that he had been robbed of some papers, and in particular of three hundred sonnets which he regretted more than all the rest. Some one having betrayed surprise that he had made so many, he replied that they were blank sonnets, that is to say, the ending rhymes of all the sonnets which he had de-

<sup>1</sup> Many examples of these ingenuities may be found in the *Curiosités littéraires* of M. Lalanne. We give a specimen of these *bouts-rimés* "On the death of a cat," of which all the end-words are names of countries or towns:—

" Aimable Iris, honneur de la	<i>Bourgogne,</i>
Vous pleurez votre chat, plus que nous	<i>Philipsbourg ;</i>
Et fussiez-vous, je pense, au fond de la	<i>Gascogne,</i>
On entendrait de là vos cris jusqu'à	<i>Fribourg ;</i>
Sa peau fut à vos yeux fourrure de	<i>Pologne,</i>
On eût chassé pour lui Titi du	<i>Luxembourg.</i>
Il ferait l'ornement d'un couvent de	<i>Cologne,</i>
Mais quoi ! l'on vous l'a pris ? l'on a bien pris	<i>Strasbourg !</i>
D'aller pour une perte, Iris, comme la	<i>Sienna,</i>
Se percer sottement la gorge d'une	<i>Vienne,</i>
Il faudrait que l'on eût la cervelle à l'	<i>Anvers.</i>
Chez moi, le plus beau chat, je vous le dis, ma	<i>Bonne,</i>
Vaut moins que ne vaudrait une orange à	<i>Narbonne,</i>
Et qu'un verre commun ne se vend à	<i>Nevers."</i>

"Philipsburg" was a strongly fortified town in the grand-duchy of Baden, taken from the French in 1635 and 1675; "Strasbourg" was through secret negotiations given up to Louis XIV. in 1681; "Sienna" is the French for Sienna, a town in Italy; it means here "his;" "Vienne" is a town in Dauphiné, and has here the meaning of "sword," so called from being made in the city of Vienne; "Anvers" is Antwerp, but is here used for *à l'envers*, topsy-turvy; Bonne was an abbey in Provence, in the diocese of Senes; oranges are plentiful at Narbonne; and common glass was made at Nevers.

sired to fill in. This sounded odd, and thenceforth men began to do, for a kind of sport, when in company, what Dulot did by himself." Sarasin ridiculed this idea in four songs, under the title of *Dulot vaincu, ou la défaite des bouts-rimés*, which certainly discouraged the fashion. Hédelin, Abbé d'Aubignac,<sup>1</sup> author of a *History of the Time, or Record of the Kingdom of Coquetry, taken from the last voyage of the Dutch to the Indies of the Levant*, which was no doubt in part an imitation of the peculiar genre of Mademoiselle de Scudéry, and which excited the latter's jealousy, formed a *coterie* at his own house, for which, being patronised by the Dauphin, he endeavoured to obtain the title of Royal Academy; but his wish was fortunately not granted. Another abbé of the same age, Cotin,<sup>2</sup> was a man of some spirit, and of a certain grandeur and dignity in the making of verses. He published in 1634 *Jerusalem in desolation, or Meditations on the lessons of darkness*; and subsequently essays on *Philosophy*, on the *Immortal soul*, *Christian poems*, a *Paraphrase on the Song of Solomon*, as well as a collection of *Enigmas* and *Rondeaux*. He too had a quarrel with Mademoiselle de Scudéry, and with all her school, against whom he wrote bitter things in his *Oeuvres Galantes*. Ménage took up the cudgels for his friends, and, on the occasion of a madrigal addressed by Cotin to the lady,<sup>3</sup> the sexagenarian scholar lampooned the abbé in a Latin epigram, whereupon the other collected all the verses he had launched against Mademoiselle de Scudéry, and dedicated the book to her. Cotin decidedly had the best of the war of words: Ménage was constrained to let him alone.

<sup>1</sup> 1604-1676.<sup>2</sup> 1604-1682.<sup>3</sup> The offending madrigal was as follows:—

"Pour un mal d'oreille.

"Suivre le Muse est une erreur bien lourde;  
 De ses faveurs voyez le fruit;  
 Les escrits de Sapho menèrent tant de bruit  
 Que cette Nymphe en devint sourde."



The abbé, too, had powerful friends who came to his assistance ; Gilles Boileau, the brother of the poet—who treated the poor abbé almost worse than Molière did, because Cotin had first spoken lightly of Boileau's poems—Lemaître, and others. On the production of *les Précieuses Ridicules* he thought that the greatest dramatist of the age would assist him in demolishing *Ménage*. Molière let him expect his revenge ; all the town came to see the two wranglers photographed on the stage in the *Femmes Savantes* ; but when it came to the point, *Ménage*, under the name of Vadius, was let off so cheaply, and Cotin, under the name of Trissotin, was so sorely handled, that the poor abbé could hardly lift up his head again. That satire dogged the clerical satirist to his grave.

#### § 4. SATIRISTS OF THE PERIOD.

One kind of extravagance leads to, or at least accompanies many others ; and the extravagance of literary manner was soon matched, in the seventeenth century, by the extravagance of literary license. The courts of Henry IV. and Louis XIII. were, as we have seen, not such as could attract a man of scrupulous morality, or a woman of purity and refinement. The hôtel de Rambouillet had indeed served as a sort of refuge for the courtiers of both sexes who chose to give to the royal assemblies no more of their time than strict etiquette demanded ; and it is on this account, because the centre of the literary society of the age was the centre of its morality, that Madame de Rambouillet deserves the warmest recognition of the student of literature. On the other hand, the courts of the monarchs were not without their literary men, who, if they were extravagant in their licentiousness, were free from much of the affectation which mars their more

soberly conducted rivals. The best of them was Théophile de Viau,<sup>1</sup> a poet of great ease and brilliancy, the Coryphæus of a band of young and well-born courtiers who defied all attempts to set bounds to the indulgence of their appetites. It was not the company of the hôtel de Rambouillet from which Théophile had to expect, or actually received, his bitterest opposition. The same authorities which had persecuted Villon and Marot turned their formidable weapons against him; and though the times had changed in the interval, he was as nearly burned at the stake as any man could then be for an offence mainly literary. As it was, his effigy was burned on the Place de Grève; he was imprisoned, and rescued only by the powerful friends whom he had made at court—Liancourt, Montmorency, and others. Naturally the accusation against him was in part religious, in part moral; but it was argued in his defence that he had abjured Protestantism, and that he had translated Plato's *Phædo*, thereby testifying to his belief in the immortality of the soul. Such a rebuttal alone would have done him little service against the exasperation of his enemies, amongst whom it is painful to have to mention the elegant and learned Guez de Balzac,<sup>2</sup> a friend of his youth, and a staid brother-litterateur. Théophile fled to England, came back, was caught, and thrown into the same dungeon where Ravallac, the murderer of Henry IV., had been immured. There he remained for two years, and was at last perpetually banished from France. This sentence was not strictly carried out, for he died at Paris, a year later, at the youthful age of thirty-six.

Théophile's poetry is before all things vivid and highly coloured. His figures force attention; they startle—unfortunately they sometimes make us laugh. What, for instance, could be more ridiculous than this?—

<sup>1</sup> 1590-1626.

<sup>2</sup> 1594-1655.

“Here the whitening rocks,  
Groaning under the shock of the waves,  
Lift up their horned bulks  
Against the anger of the elements,  
And oppose their bare heads  
To the lightning’s threat.”<sup>1</sup>

And what, again, more absurd than these lines, quoted by Boileau from his *Pyramus and Thisbe*, a drama which he wrote when very young, which had a great success in its time, but is now scarcely known?—

“Ah! here is the dagger which has been basely polluted.  
With the blood of its master! It blushes at it, the traitor.”<sup>2</sup>

Yet, this same poet, when writing to the king and asking him permission to return to France, could express such manly sentiments, as are to be found in the following verses:—

“He who hurls the thunder,  
Who governs the elements,  
And moves with earthquakes  
The great mass of the earth;  
God, who placed the sceptre into your hands,  
Who can take it away from you to-morrow,  
He, who lends you the light of his countenance,  
And who, in spite of the fleurs-de-lis,  
Shall one day make dust  
Of your buried limbs.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “ Ici des rochers blanchissants                      Contre la colère des airs  
Du choc des vagues gémissants                    Et présentent leurs testes nues  
Hérissent leurs masses cornues                   À la menace des esclairs.”

<sup>2</sup> “ Ah! voicy le poignard qui du sang de son maistre  
S’est souillé laschement! Il en rougit, le traistre.”

*Act V. scene 2.*

<sup>3</sup> “ Celui qui lance le tonnerre,                    Qui vous le peut ôter demain,  
Qui gouverne les éléments,                    Lui qui vous prête sa lumière,  
Et ment avec des tremblements                   Et qui, malgré les fleurs-de-lis,  
La grande masse de la terre;                   Un jour fera de la poussière  
Dieu qui vous mit le sceptre en main           De vos membres ensevelis.”

Théophile did not see nature, as the courtly poets of his time depicted it, trimmed and cut and clipped, festooned and made fit to be presented to high-born lords and ladies, but he saw it as it really exists. Witness the following lines :—

“ In this solitary and sombre valley  
 The stag bells at the murmuring water,  
 And casting his eyes in the brook,  
 Delights in looking at his shadow.  
 A cold and gloomy silence  
 Reigns beneath the shade of these boughs,  
 And the winds lash the elms  
 With amorous violence. . .  
 I shall see these verdant woods,  
 Where our isles and the fresh grass,  
 Serve the bellowing flocks  
 As a walk and as a manger.  
 When Aurora returns there it finds (grown again)  
 The grass, which they have eaten during the day.  
 I shall see the water which quenches their thirst,  
 And I shall hear the plaint of the gravel,  
 And the murmuring of the stream's echo,  
 Amidst the insults of the mariners.  
 I shall gather these apricots,  
 These flame-coloured strawberries . . .  
 And these figs and melons,  
 Whereof the north winds  
 Have never yet kissed the rinds,  
 And these yellow darling grapes,  
 Which are never injured by hail,  
 Sheltered by our rocks.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “ Dans ce val solitaire et sombre  
 Le cerf qui brame au bruit de l'eau,  
 Penchant ses yeux dans le ruisseau,  
 S'amuse à regarder son ombre.  
 Un froid et ténébreux silence  
 Dort à l'ombre de ces rameaux,  
 Et les vents battent les ormeaux  
 D'une amoureuse violence . . .  
 Je verrai ces bois verdissants

Où nos fies et l'herbe fraîche  
 Servent aux troupeaux mugissants  
 Et de promenoir et de crèche.  
 L'aurore y trouve à son retour  
 L'herbe qu'ils ont mangée le jour ;  
 Je verrai l'eau qui les abreuve,  
 Et jorrai plaindre les graviers  
 Et résonner l'écho du fleuve  
 Aux injures des mariniers



One drama was probably enough for Théophile to write.<sup>1</sup> He saw that it was not his line, and forsook it with an apology. "Formerly," he says in one of his short poems, "when my verses contributed to the animation of the stage, the constraint I was in gave me much trouble; the wearisome work made a martyr of me for some time, but at last, thank the gods, I am quit of it. . . . Rules displease me, I write at random; a good wit does nothing except at its ease." He turned again to his odes, elegies, epigrams, satires, and epistles in verse and in prose, which prose is concise, nervous, clear, and superior to his poetry.

After extravagance and eccentricity, satire follows as a matter of course. We have seen something of it in the person of the Abbé Cotin, but a greater than he was behind: a satirist of seventeenth-century life in general, of licentiousness and literary affectation in particular. *The True Comical History of Francion*, by Charles Sorel,<sup>2</sup> Sieur de Souvigny, appeared first in 1622, and made a great sensation. It was not long in running through sixty editions, being occasionally enlarged and reinforced by new allusions and illustrations. Its first title was *The Comic History of Francion, a Scourge of the Vicious*, and its authorship was veiled under the assumed name of Nicolas de Moulinet; and in his *Bibliothèque Gauloise*, published in 1664, a sort of *catalogue raisonné*, Sorel denies having written it. No doubt our author had the troubled lot of

Je cueillerai ces abricots,	N'a jamais su baiser l'écorce,
Ces fraises à couleur de flammes. . .	Et ces jaunes muscats si chers
Et ces figues et ces melons	Que jamais la grêle ne force
Dont la bouche des aquilons	Dans l'asile de nos rochers."

<sup>1</sup> A tragedy, *Pasiphaë*, has been wrongly attributed to him. It is said that he also assisted Sorel, Saint Amant, Du Vivier, and Boisrobert, in the composition of a ballet, *The Bacchanals*.

<sup>2</sup> 1602-1674. It may be mentioned here that Sorel was the author of a duodecimo pamphlet, *de l'Académie française, établie pour la correction et l'embellissement du Langage, et si elle est de quelque utilité au public*, 1654. Sorel answers his question by a decided negative.



Théophile de Viau before his eyes, and therefore resolutely maintained his incognito; for there is no question that he can at times surpass his contemporary in abandonment of mood, getting even beyond the *Parnasse satirique*, although he claims the excuse of adopting this tone simply as a "scourge of vice," and in order to make sin appear hideous.

Sorel was distinctly a comic romancist, and he hits the school of d'Urfé tolerably hard in the *Extravagant Shepherd*.<sup>1</sup> But it was in the *Francion* that he launched his satires with most effect and most comprehensively. Guez de Balzac, under the character of the pedant Hortensius; Boisrobert,<sup>2</sup> the buffoon-confidant of Richelieu, whose vocation it was to keep the court of Louis XIII. in perpetual good humour; Racan, who figures as Saluste; Gaston d'Orléans as Clérante, and a dozen besides, either under their own names or thinly disguised, come in for a touch of the satirist's lash. *Francion*, the hero, is a kind of Don Juan, who passes through numerous adventures, nearly all leading out of or up to the vagaries of some woman. As the narrative in the edition before us<sup>3</sup> fills five hundred and thirty-nine closely-printed pages, and

<sup>1</sup> Guy-Patin, who agrees with Ménage and Tallemant des Réaux in positively assigning the *Francion* to Sorel, ascribes to him, in addition, the *Berger extravagant*, *Ophize de Chrysanthe*, and a *Philosophie Universelle*; and he goes on to say: "He has still more than twenty volumes to write, and he would be glad if he could do it before dying, but he cannot persuade the printers. He is very delicate, and I have often seen him ill. Yet he lives comfortably, because he is very sober. He is a man of much common sense, and taciturn; neither a bigot nor a Mazarin."

<sup>2</sup> 1592-1662. He produced a farce called the *Three Orontes*, founded on a story which Tallemant des Réaux records him as having retailed for the amusement of his patron Richelieu. It was the well-known account of the hoax played on Mademoiselle de Gournay, the adopted daughter of Montaigne, and the author of *Ombre*. Poor and old, she was anticipating the honour of a visit from Racan, when two practical jokers conceived the idea of visiting her, one after the other, in the character of the expected guest. When the real Racan came, of course the unfortunate old lady was already mystified, and his reception was hardly as pleasant as it might have been.

<sup>3</sup> The edition of M. Colombey; Paris, Delahays, 1858.

would make at least six of the volumes in which our modern novels usually appear, and as it has no plot or link of any kind running through it, the reader will spare us an analysis. In return we will recommend this romance to his attention, as a work of superior literary merit, and as having the further advantage of being as interesting as *Roderick Random*, and the disadvantage of being even coarser.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## § 1. RICHELIEU AND HIS WORK.

It is time that we should turn our attention more particularly upon the central historical figure of the age whose literary annals we have been tracing; upon the man who dealt French feudalism a blow from which it never recovered, who raised France to the strongest and proudest position amongst the nations of Europe, who made the French king a Sultan, not to say a Grand Lama, and the Government of France an autocracy, a centralised despotism, a vampire fattening upon the blood of the nation; who, to be just, produced order and peace from chaos, delaying for a century and a half the cataclysm in which monarchy and aristocracy were to be overwhelmed; who, himself an author, patronised letters and arts, founded the Academy, and emphasised by his death the close of the later Renaissance—Armand Jean du Plessis, Cardinal Richelieu.<sup>1</sup>

The death of Henry the Fourth<sup>2</sup> left France a prey to dissolute and impotent self-seekers, who could ruin their country, but who could not govern it. Mary de Medici, the Queen-Mother, on whom devolved the regency of France and the charge of the infant king, chose for her counsellors the most worthless and unscrupulous favourites, with whom none more worthy could possibly associate themselves. Concino Concini and Leonora Galigai, afterwards his wife, a couple of Florentine adventurers, who had come to France in the train

<sup>1</sup> 1585-1642.<sup>2</sup> 1610.

of the Queen-Mother, d'Epemon, the Pope's Nuncio, and the Spanish ambassador, were the counsellors from whom she chose to borrow her policy. As for the young Louis, he was kept carefully in the background, cultivating those tastes and accomplishments which were the chief glory of this royal huntsman, confectioner, market-gardener, falconer, gunmaker, of whom it was well said that "he had a hundred valet's qualities and not one quality of a master." The truly great policy of Henry IV., for the prosecution of which he and Sully had raised vast sums of money, was thrown on one side; and it is said that upwards of forty million livres were spent in buying the acquiescence or silence of all who showed a tendency to be troublesome. Yet, amongst the more patriotic Frenchmen of the day, a demand arose for the convocation of the States-General, which the queen and her minions could not resist. In 1614, accordingly, the nobility, clergy, and the Third-Estate met in Paris, where, after much talk, a desperate quarrel between the clergy and the Third-Estate, and a good deal of abject flattery of the court by the first two orders, they were dismissed in the following year, never to assemble again until the eighteenth century was drawing to a close. Amongst the clergy who represented the Church in this memorable assembly were the Cardinals de Joyeuse and Duperron, Bishop Camus, and, selected as the spokesman of his order, Richelieu, then Bishop of Luçon.

Richelieu had not been intended for the Church, but the bishopric was a family appanage, and his elder brother preferring the monastery to the cathedral, Armand Jean, by this time a soldier, was converted into a clerical dignitary. It is said that for four years he devoted eight hours daily to the study of theology, and thus undermined a constitution never very robust. At the age of twenty-two he went to Rome to be instituted to his see, and being under the canonical age, he first antedated his birth by the necessary interval,

and then, the consecration over, prayed the Pope for absolution.<sup>1</sup> It is a picture of the man, as wily as he was resolute, as unscrupulous in means as he was ambitious in his aim. At the meeting of the States-General he was one of the most abject flatterers of Mary de Medici, and even paid court to Leonora Concini, whose husband had been created Marshal d'Ancre, the consequence being that when the Parliament was dissolved Richelieu remained in Paris as a counsellor of state. Not long afterwards he became almoner to the young Queen Anne, the wife of Louis XIII., was employed on delicate missions by the Queen-Mother, and was appointed minister of foreign affairs and war.

A glorious future was insured to France from the moment when Richelieu became the pilot of her fortunes. He adopted forthwith the policy sketched out by Henry IV., and lived to render his country greater services than Henry himself could have rendered under similar circumstances. Consider for a moment what were the actual achievements of Richelieu as a statesman. He brought to an end the long and disastrous religious wars which had devastated France, not by mere good fortune, but by humbling one after another all the brave leaders of the Protestant cause, and displaying in the siege and capture of Rochelle a military talent of no mean order; he conciliated his foes by securing religious toleration throughout France; he created the French navy; he humbled England, destroying the force which the despicable Buckingham had brought to the relief of the Protestants; he abased Austria and Savoy, thoroughly defeating the latter in the field; he conquered Lorraine, overran Alsace, enabled Portugal to cast off her allegiance to Spain, and seized Catalonia from the crumbling empire of Philip's weaker successors. Finally, he concluded advantageous treaties with England, Sweden,

<sup>1</sup> This has been contradicted; but Vittorio Siri, in his *Memorie recondite*, says so, and mentions that the Pope observed: "The young bishop is endued with rare genius, but he is subtle and crafty."



Russia, Belgium, and Holland. Side by side with these triumphs he overcame a thousand personal enemies, smiting them in detail ; now a conspiracy of the Court, of his fellow-counsellors, of Monsieur, the Queen-Mother, the Queen, the king himself ; now the rebellion of a province or country ; now the slanders or threats of those whom he had injured, or who envied his power. This one man, in short, was the life and soul of the France over which Louis le Grand was to wield the sceptre through seventy brilliant and memorable years ; this was the statesman who destroyed the power of the barons<sup>1</sup> and the Third-Estate, who made the government of France a mere bureaucracy, depending always on the wisdom of its chief minister. This man it was who taught royalty its one indispensable art of drawing a vast revenue from a struggling and starving population. This, too, was the man who, amidst all his triumphs and fame, valued before everything the repute of a man of letters, who sat at the feet of Madame de Rambouillet, who pointed and accentuated the later classical Renaissance, whereof he was the outcome, the exponent, the glory, and, let us not forget to add, the despot.

The death of Richelieu is an epoch which must not be allowed to pass without notice. It took place at the close of 1642, in the fifty-eighth year of his age, and barely five months before that of the king. "On the third of December,<sup>2</sup> in the afternoon, the king came to see the cardinal for the last time. The doctors, having given up all hope, had abandoned the sick man to some quacks, who procured him a little relief, but his weakness increased. On the morning of the fourth, perceiving the approach of death, he desired his niece, the Duchess d'Aiguillon, to retire—'the person,' accord-

<sup>1</sup> In 1626 Richelieu issued an ordinance for the destruction of the fortifications of towns and castles not being of service in the protection of the frontiers.

<sup>2</sup> H. Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. xi. p. 577. To this work I owe a great deal of this chapter.

ing to his own words, 'whom he had most loved.' It was the only moment, not of weakness but of tenderness, that he had had; his immovable firmness was not belied during all his long sufferings. All the bystanders, ministers, generals, relatives, and domestics, had melted into tears; for this terrible man was, by the confession of contemporaries the least favourable to him, 'the best master, relative, and friend that ever existed.' Towards noon he heaved a deep sigh, then a feebler one, then his body sank down and remained immovable—his great soul had departed."

As a patron of literature and a *littérateur* Richelieu deserves attention. It was during his first reverse at court in the year 1618, when the assassination of d'Ancre led to the temporary disgrace of the queen-mother and of himself, that he wrote at Avignon his earliest brochure. It was a *Defence of the Chief Points of the Catholic Faith against the Letter of four* (Protestant) *Ministers of Charente*. The pamphlet is crude and bitter enough in style; but it is distinguished by a warm plea for toleration in matters of religion, and, in fact, makes it a charge against the Calvinists that they would refuse liberty of conscience. A second and more important work, written in the same year, and which has passed through as many as thirty editions, was the *Instruction of a Christian*. But a more characteristic, perhaps a better work than either of these was his tragi-comedy *Mirame*, the reputed produce of his riper leisure, after many years' intercourse in the drawing-rooms of Paris with all that they included of refinement and learning, and in which he certainly had a hand, if he did not wholly write it. He built a theatre at the Palais Cardinal expressly for the production of his drama, expending upon it a sum of not less than two hundred thousand crowns, whereon followed success in the usual order of things. Fontenelle<sup>1</sup> informs us that "the applause given to

<sup>1</sup> 1657-1757.

the play, or rather to him who was known to be so deeply interested in it, so transported the Cardinal that at one time he stood up and leaned out of his box, to show himself to the company ; at another time he made a sign for silence, in order that still finer passages might be heard with effect." A Frenchman all over, he coveted the triumph of the intellect.

The literary productions of Richelieu were by no means the mere scintillations of his leisure moments, or the biddings for fame of a vain and sumptuous *dilettante*. The Cardinal was by natural bent a man of studious and refined spirit ; and great as his labours were, great as were his anxieties and temptations, he was throughout his life a regular and industrious author. According to one of his biographers he would usually go to bed about midnight, sleep for three hours, wake and write from three o'clock to six, and sleep for a couple of hours again. The man who can adhere to such a division of his time as this, may indeed shorten his life, but he will be able to produce much in the course of a dozen or twenty years. Richelieu did both. If he had lived, he might have been regent of France during the minority of Louis XIV. He died before his king, but his voluminous literary remains—to leave out of sight his still more voluminous state-papers—continued his fame and his usefulness beyond his death. His *Memoirs*, which he himself called a *History of Louis XIII.* form a copious and very serviceable storehouse of facts and elucidations for historians of the time.<sup>1</sup> This detailed narrative ends at the year 1638, with the birth of Louis XIV. Possibly the Cardinal had begun to experience the cost of his heavy labours ; for he complains of "indispositions, and the burden of affairs," and wished to husband his

<sup>1</sup> M. Henri Martin, in his *Histoire de France*, vol. xi. p. 490, bears willing testimony to their value, and says, "We cannot part without regret from this vast work, when, thanks to it, we have long lived on familiar terms with so lofty a mood of thought. The abundance of detail at first fatigues us, but a persevering attention is amply repaid."

strength for the yet grander future which he saw before him. From this point to the close of his life he wrote a succinct *Narrative of the Great Deeds of the King*—a title appropriate in all save the last word. Another work, much wider in scope and distinguished by many statesmanlike inferences and generalisations, the *Political Testament*, has commonly been ascribed to Richelieu.<sup>1</sup>

Let us hasten from Richelieu's literary works to the considerably higher claim which he has upon our notice as a patron of literature. Not, indeed, that he invariably commands our esteem and gratitude in this aspect, for with much generosity<sup>2</sup> and liberal discernment, he undoubtedly played the autocrat in his part of Mæcenas more than was either wise or acceptable to literary men. On the whole, however, he was a munificent and steadfast protector and encourager of literature, and the drama was the branch which he particularly patronised. Himself an amateur playwright, not content with having, in a great measure, produced an entire play, he composed the plots of a dozen more, leaving them to be filled in by one or other of his numerous clients or pensioners. We cannot but admire the sense and moral courage of this cardinal-patron of the stage, who, defending the comedians before the king, declared that "so long as they conducted the proceedings of the theatres so as to keep them free from impurity and wantonness, the exercise of their calling ought not to be held as cause of blame to them, nor to prejudice their reputation." On the other hand, Richelieu claimed to lay down the laws

<sup>1</sup> Voltaire declined to accept it as the work of the Cardinal, even after the first chapter had been found revised and corrected in Richelieu's own handwriting. The balance of evidence would seem to favour the assertion of Montesquieu, that the *Testament* was written under the eyes and by the direction of Richelieu, in much the same manner as the *Memoirs* of Sully.

<sup>2</sup> It is said that Richelieu spent four million francs a year. Much of this was no doubt expended for the public good; and as M. Martin justly says, "the pensions which he bestowed on a crowd of soldiers, diplomatists, literary men and artists, were genuine national rewards."



of the stage, and he intervened with some degree of arbitrary power in the hot dispute which was waged amongst dramatists and literary men after the death of Hardy, and when the company of comedians at the hôtel de Bourgogne were just about beginning to play the productions of Corneille. He imposed upon the *Comédiens du Roi* the unities of the Greek drama, and thus did more than the most rigid of Parisian pedants would have done to perpetuate the severest exaggerations of classical form, and to out-Aristotle Aristotle.

One of Richelieu's greatest works, after all, was the definite establishment of the Academy. The virtual origin of the French Academy was a club for the study of French grammar and orthography, formed in the house of Baïf, a disciple of the Pléiade, of which Charles IX. became "protector" in 1570; granting it at the same time, in spite of the opposition of Parliament and University, formal letters patent. The death of Baïf, and the disturbed condition of the country, interrupted the history of what might have been, without cavil, the nucleus of the existing Academy; but the idea had crystallised; and it reappeared in 1612, in a pamphlet of David Rivault: *A Plan for an Academy, and for the Introduction of the same in the Court*.<sup>1</sup> It was not apparently until 1630 that the actual society to which Richelieu accorded his protection was formed; Valentin Conrart, one of the king's secretaries, then followed the precedent of Baïf by assembling in his house a club of scholars and literary men: Godeau, Gombault, Chapelain, Giry, Habert, Sérizay, the Abbé de Cérisy, and Malleville. After these came Faret, Desmarest, and the Abbé de Boisrobert; and it was through the latter that Richelieu, in 1634, offered to give the society the recognition of the State, and to constitute it as a public body. Sérizay, Malleville, and others were for rejecting the

<sup>1</sup> See on the whole subject *Curiosités littéraires* by Ludovic Lalanne; p. 272 *et seq.*



offer ; but it was nevertheless “unanimously resolved to accede to the pleasure of his Eminence.” The result was the incorporation of the Académie Française, which had previously been styled the Academy of Wits, the Academy of Eloquence, and the Eminent Academy. The society remodelled its statutes, and declared grandiosely that, “It seemed that nought was wanting to the happiness of the kingdom but to take this language which we speak out of the list of barbarous tongues . . . that our language, already more perfect than any other living language, might at length fairly succeed to the Latin, as the Latin had to the Greek, if more care for elocution were taken than hitherto ; that the functions of the academicians should be to purify the language from the defilements which it had contracted, whether in the mouths of the people, or in the crowds of the law-courts and the impurities of chicanery, or by the evil habits of ignorant courtiers, or by the abuse of those who corrupt it in writing, and of those who say well what they have to say in the lecture rooms, but inexactly.”<sup>1</sup>

The Academy had to pay for its incorporation ; but not so much as it was willing to pay. In the articles which it had drawn up for the king’s signature it pledged its members “to revere the virtue and the memory of Monseigneur their protector.” Richelieu struck out this piece of sycophancy ; but he permitted a number of court-officials—Séguier, Montmort, du Chastelet, Bautin, and Servien—to foist themselves on the list of academicians, they having raised obstacles to the confirmation of the charter for this very purpose. Nevertheless it took another two years and a half to secure the necessary registration of the document by the Parliament of Paris, which was clearly jealous and apprehensive of the power

<sup>1</sup> Lalanne, *ibid.* p. 275. Epigrams were at once showered upon the new foundation ; one asserting, *à propos* of the above declaration, that Richelieu had given to the members two thousand *livres* apiece out of the eighty thousand voted for cleaning Paris of its filth.

sought to be vested in the Academy; and this sanction was only accorded, after three peremptory decrees and a good deal of stern insistence, on condition that a new clause should be added to the statutes, to the effect that "the members of the said assembly and academy shall take cognisance of nothing except the adornment, embellishment, and augmentation of the French language, and of books which shall be produced by them, and by other persons who shall desire and will it." The lawyers, it is said, were of opinion that, without this clause, the Academy would have been able to inflict a penalty on them if their briefs were not drawn up according to rule. It is well to note upon how high a level, since the days of Ronsard and Malherbe, these disputes of grammar and rhetoric had come to be waged.

We have seen how Richelieu applied (the word is elastic) to the Academy to condemn the *Cid* of Corneille, which his Eminence had somehow failed to reconcile with Aristotle. This condemnation was drawn up by Chapelain, and was corrected and annotated by the Cardinal himself. Whatever may be thought of this first important judgment under the new order of things, it is impossible to acquit the Academy in its early days of subserviency. The king and the cardinal had, indeed, made it too fashionable; the great lords and courtiers were eager to join its ranks, and favour did more for the candidates than their intellectual deserts. One anecdote may serve as well as fifty, although it is an instance of the opposition, occasionally successful, raised by the best of the academicians against the prostitution of their unquestionably high vocation. Conrart, the originator of the Academy, such as Richelieu found it, being dead, an ignorant great nobleman desired to fill his place. Whereupon Patin—the originator of the now obligatory speech in honour of the member deceased—observed to his colleagues: "An ancient Greek had a lyre, whereof one string was broken.

Instead of replacing it with gut he chose a silver cord ; and the lyre lost its tune." The hint sufficed for that occasion, but it was soon forgotten.

No doubt many of the first academicians were well worthy of their seats. Maynard, Voiture, Vaugelas, l'Etoile, Balzac, Saint-Amant, Racan, Godeau, Chapelain, Conrart, are names which would adorn the books of any society of literary men.<sup>1</sup> In 1638 the Academy resolved upon compiling a dictionary of the French language, and Chapelain and Vaugelas submitted plans for it. That of the first-named was selected, and a list of authors was drawn up from whom the examples were to be taken.<sup>2</sup> To Vaugelas,<sup>3</sup> a Savoyard by birth, and a man of great judgment and refinement, was entrusted the care of editing this important work. The first edition did not appear until 1694, four years after that of Furetière already mentioned. Subsequent editions were printed in 1718, 1740, 1762, 1813, 1835, and one which is now in course of publication, begun in 1858, and of which the second

<sup>1</sup> The number of *fauteuils* was forty from the beginning. Lalanne, in the work already cited, gives a complete table of their successive occupants, wherefrom we will copy one. Original member, Fr. Maynard ; 1647, P. Corneille ; 1685, T. Corneille ; 1710, De la Motte ; 1731, Bussy-Rabutin ; 1737, Foncemagne ; 1780, Chabanon ; 1795, Naigeon ; 1810, N. Lemercier ; 1841, Victor Hugo. Amongst those who have never sat in the Academy are Molière, la Rochefoucauld, Regnard, Lesage, J. J. Rousseau, Béranger, and, naturally enough, the independent lexicographers. In fact an academician, Furetière, despairing of seeing the Academy's dictionary completed, began one on his own account ; whereupon (in 1685) he was expelled from the society. He had his revenge, both by lampooning the Academy, and by publishing his dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> This list includes, for prose, Amyot, Montaigne, du Vair, Desportes, Charron, Bertaud, Marion, de la Guesle, Pibrac, d'Espeisses, Arnaud, the *Catholicon* from the *Satire Ménippée*, the *Memoirs* of Marguerite of Navarre, Coeffeteau, Duperron, de Sales, d'Urfé, de Molières, Malherbe, Duplessis-Mornay, d'Ossat, de Lanoue, de Dammartin, de Refuge, d'Aubigné, and — Bardin and du Chastelet, as a matter of course : these two being academicians already deceased. To represent the poets were chosen Marot, Saint-Gelais, Ronsard, du Bellay, du Bartas, Desportes, Bertrand, Duperron, Garnier, Regnier, Malherbe, des Lingendes, Motin, Touvant, Monfuron, Théophile, Passerat, Rapin, and Sainte-Marthe.

<sup>3</sup> 1585-1650.

*livraison* appeared in 1867. On account of this slowness in bringing out its dictionary the Academy was, from the very beginning, the but of a number of epigrams, whereof one by Boisrobert is worth quoting :—

“ Six months they’ve been engaged on F :  
O that my fate would guarantee  
That I should keep alive till G. <sup>1</sup>

The plan of the Dictionary is conceived in a somewhat cumbersome method, necessarily involving great labour in the first instance, and continuous application in each successive generation. According to the preface of the first *livraison* of its present edition, the Academy intends to publish an Historical Dictionary of the French Language, “ where the words will be followed, through all their vicissitudes of form, construction, and acceptation, from their origin up to the present time ;” where the language to be studied will be that of “ ordinary life and literature,” with “ the orthographical variations,” with abundance of examples. Formerly the Academy arranged all words in classes of relative dignity, as fit for the sublime style, the burlesque, the familiar, and the like ; a scheme which could evidently be quite satisfactory only under a despotism. Whilst man is man, and literary influences are what they are, it is in vain either to prescribe or to proscribe a word more effectually than is done by the example of the great prose writers and poets themselves, whose authority must always be taken at first-hand. In spite of what they told us in the nursery, humanity is perpetuated from parent to child, and not by favour of the doctors.

Of course empiricism and pedantry abounded amongst our early dictionary-makers ; and the language suffered as well as gained by them. Amongst other arbitrary measures, they

<sup>1</sup> In 1819, Andrieux, secretary of the Academy, said, “ I shall die of the Dictionary.

were on the point of suppressing the serviceable *car* ; and their irresponsible high-handedness drew from Ménage a spirited *Petition from the Dictionaries to the Gentlemen of the French Academy*, which was really a powerful reclamation against the absurdity of certain of their judgments.<sup>1</sup>

From henceforth it becomes necessary for us, in approaching the life or the works of a known celebrated French writer, to seek out his name upon the tablets of the Academy ; and the result of our search must be either to increase or to diminish the praise of a society to which all the authors of first rank, in every age, ought of right to belong.

## § 2. DESCARTES.

One author in the seventeenth century, in addition to Molière, was never invited to take his seat in the Parliament of letters ; one author never dreamed of submitting himself as a candidate for what was, after all, at first, a doubtful honour. No philosopher of great name appears amongst the early members of the Academy ; and least of all was it likely that an exception would be found in René Descartes,<sup>2</sup> a fugitive, if not an exile from his native country, who, if he had

<sup>1</sup> The first verses are about the best :—

“ A nos seigneurs académiques,	Disant que, depuis trente années,
Nos seigneurs les hypercritiques,	On a, par diverses menées,
Souverains arbitres des mots,	Banni des romans, des poulets,
Doctes faiseurs d'avant-propos,	Des lettres douces, des billets,
Cardinal-historiographes,	Des madrigaux, des élégies,
Surintendants des orthographes,	Des sonnets et des comédies,
Raffineurs de locutions,	Ces nobles mots, moult, ains, jajoit,
Entrepreneurs de versions,	Ores, adonc, maint, aussi soit,
Peseurs de brèves et de longues,	À-tant, si-que, piteux, icelle,
De voyelles et de diphthongues,	Trop-plus, trop-mieux, blandice, isnelle,
Supplie humblement Calepin,	Pièça, tollir, illec, ainçois,
Avec Nicot, Estienne, Oudin :	Comme étant de mauvais François.”

<sup>2</sup> 1596-1650.



not jealously concealed his opinions in his lifetime, would have been still more obnoxious to Court, Parliament, University, and Sorbonne than Pascal himself, and who was scarcely in his grave before the University of Paris claimed from Parliament the execution against his disciples of the fatuous decree of 1624, condemning to death "those who should teach doctrines contrary to those of the ancient and approved authors." The sycophants of a cardinal—even of one of the most liberal-minded of cardinals—were the last men to do honour to the high-priest of natural philosophy and human reason. And yet, considering what the object and aims of the Academy professedly were, few independent authors of the seventeenth century better deserved a place amongst them than Descartes, who, at a time when Latin was the recognised and almost universal language of philosophy, wrote his *Discourse on Method* in "the language of his country, the vulgar tongue," desiring to address himself to "those who employ simply their pure natural reason." The honour and service done to the vaunted successor and heir of Latin and Greek might have condoned the direct appeal from scholasticism to common sense. For, after all, however much Descartes prided himself on conversing directly and familiarly with the minds of the least sophisticated of his fellow-men, no prose style amongst the various styles of his contemporaries was at once more dignified, more characteristically French, and at the same time more closely modelled upon, and, as it were, translated from the Latin diction. So much is this the case that enthusiastic critics have extolled the language of Descartes as a very pattern of French prose, worthy of all imitation, and all but incapable of improvement. The praise appears to us to be exaggerated; for Descartes was, as we shall see, prolix and even cumbrous; eminently severe, logical, and effective, but exacting a sustained attention, and destitute of almost every adornment save that of an unbroken lucidity of thought and method.

Descartes, indeed, neither received nor sought much appreciation from any source during his lifetime. He was more than forty years old when he published his first work, a *Discourse on the Method of regulating the Reason and of inquiring after Scientific Truth*. Four years later appeared his *Metaphysical Meditations*; and less than six years before his death he gave to the world the *Principles of Philosophy*. He did not write much, but preferred to think and wait; keeping, it would seem, his body in perpetual activity, and selecting such pursuits as would leave his mind most free. His father was a man of good position, member of the Parliament of Rennes, who, finding that his son was weaker in muscle than in brain, suffered him to follow his natural bent. This led him to study, to write poetry, to listen to eloquent preachers and lecturers, and, when he was old enough, to travel. "For nine years," he himself tells us, "I did nothing else than roll hither and thither in the world, seeking to be a spectator rather than an actor in the comedies played therein." For a short time (1617) he served in the ranks of Maurice of Nassau, then went into Germany to serve under the Duke of Bavaria, after this under the Count de Bucquoy, travelled through Moravia, Silesia, a part of Poland and North Germany, Holland, and finally returned to Paris in 1622. It seems to have been during this period that the teeming thoughts of his well-disciplined mind began to assume their definite organisation, and to forecast to the young philosopher the system of which he was to become the exponent. He was some time before he could realise the idea with precision, and flatter himself that he had found a clue to a worthy scientific method<sup>1</sup>—to that method which Bacon had anxiously and unsuccessfully sought, and which he placed first in his list of the *desiderata* of science, the method of all other methods, the science of sciences. With this thought in his mind he re-

<sup>1</sup> "Mirabilis scientiæ fundamenta."

turned to France ; and apparently fearing to stay in a land where opinion at that time enjoyed so little liberty, took refuge in a country which was already the chosen home of many of his compatriots—in Holland. Even there he was pursued by prejudice and threats ; or, if not so, he was apprehensive of them, and he finally settled in Sweden. Shall we call it timidity or over-sensitiveness—that strange reluctance of a staunch and well-trained mind to incur odium and give offence ? He had written a *Treatise on the World*, following the principles laid down by Copernicus ; but the work never appeared. Writing to his friend Mersenne, who had been his fellow-student under the Jesuits at la Flèche, he declared that “he would not for the world there should proceed from him a discourse containing the slightest word which might be disapproved by the Church.” So great an effort was it, in the days of Pascal and Descartes, to disentangle oneself from the systems in vogue, and to face the whole world with a denial of its most venerable beliefs. Descartes did not escape the penalty of his timidity. The man who deprecates his doctrine in delivering it must not expect to see himself acknowledged as the promulgator of a new faith ; and Descartes has perhaps not even yet been esteemed at his true value. He taught before all things the science of universal knowledge ; yet he has been regarded, in France especially, first as a mathematician alone, then as a metaphysician in chief. He was more than either of these : a physiologist, a chemist, a logician ; and more than all together, a philosopher whose subject matter was the sciences ; a philosopher not only of the known but also of the knowable. “The sciences,” he said, “are so bound up with each other that it is easier to learn them all at once than to detach them. . . . Philosophy is the cognisance of all that a man can know.” Within this “all” Descartes admits no lines of demarcation, no boundaries unpierced by the thousand nerves and ducts which

permeate the single living organism of knowledge. From God to the intelligence of the brutes, from the star to the plant, from the law to the phenomenon, all is one, and all is bound together by a melody of law, by a harmony of cause and effect, which is itself embraced within the sphere of the knowable, and which Descartes died desiring to know.

If we were writing a history of philosophy we should have a long chapter before us, comprising an examination of the method by which Descartes began anew the evolution of philosophy from phenomena, and passed *ab ovo usque ad aquilam*. Here it is impossible: we can but designate what may be read thoroughly elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> The basis of his system, as it was indeed the basis of Bacon's, and of every system which has enabled the human mind to advance one clear step in the pursuit of truth, is the initiation of all argument from simple, indisputable, incontrovertible facts, and the acceptance of nothing as a fact without extreme caution and ample verification. Hear him enlarging upon the value of this certainty in matters of belief, and revealing the frame of mind which he himself brought to the consideration of scientific truth.

"I had always a great desire to learn how to distinguish the true from the false, in order to see clearly what I was doing, and to advance on my way securely. It is true that whilst I merely observed the manners of other men, I found in them little whereby to assure myself, and that I remarked in them almost as much diversity as I had before in the opinions of philosophers; so that

<sup>1</sup> Descartes' chief works are *Essais de Philosophie, ou Discours de la Méthode pour bien conduire sa raison et rechercher la vérité dans les sciences. Plus, la Dioptrique, les Météores et la Géométrie, qui sont des essais de cette méthode; Meditationes de prima Philosophia, ubi de Dei existentia et animæ immortalitate, etc.*, followed by *Objections* by Descartes and others; *Principia Philosophiæ*, and *Traité des Passions de l'âme*. After his death were published *Règles pour la direction de l'esprit*, and *le Traité de l'homme et de la formation du fœtus*. Of his collected works several editions have appeared, the last one by M. Cousin, 1824-26.



the greatest profit I derived from them was that, seeing several things which, though they seem to us very extravagant and ridiculous, are still commonly received and approved by other great nations, I learned to believe in nothing too firmly of that which had only been commended to me by example and custom ; and thus I freed myself little by little from many errors which darken our natural light, and render us less capable of understanding what is reasonable. But after I had spent a few years in thus studying the book of the world, and in striving to acquire some experience, I one day resolved to study myself also, and to employ the whole force of my mind in choosing the ways I ought to follow ; which succeeded with me much better, I think, than if I had never departed from my country nor from my books." <sup>1</sup>

And yet this great philosopher, when ill, and though he "had studied himself," refused to take the medicines prescribed, and would not be bled, until it was too late to do him any good !

<sup>1</sup> "J'avais toujours un extrême désir d'apprendre à distinguer le vrai d'avec le faux, pour voir clair en mes actions, et marcher avec assurance en cette vie. Il est vrai que, pendant que je ne faisais que considérer les mœurs des autres hommes, je n'y trouvais guères de quoi m'assurer, et que j'y remarquai quasi autant de diversité que j'avais fait auparavant entre les opinions des philosophes ; en sorte que le plus grand profit que j'en retirais, était que, voyant plusieurs choses, qui, bien qu'elles nous semblent fort extravagantes et ridicules, ne laissent pas d'être communément reçues et approuvées par d'autres grands peuples, j'apprenais à ne rien croire trop fermement de ce qui ne m'avait été persuadé que par l'exemple et par la coutume ; et ainsi je me délivrais peu à peu de beaucoup d'erreurs qui peuvent offusquer notre lumière naturelle, et nous rendre moins capables d'entendre raison. Mais, après que j'eus employé quelques années à étudier ainsi dans le livre du monde, et à tâcher d'acquérir quelque expérience, je pris un jour résolution d'étudier aussi en moi-même, et d'employer toutes les forces de mon esprit à choisir les chemins que je devais suivre, ce qui me réussit beaucoup mieux, ce me semble, que si je ne me fusse jamais éloigné ni de mon pays ni de mes livres."—*Discours de la méthode*, i<sup>re</sup> partie.



## BOOK V.

### THE AGE OF LOUIS XIV.



#### CHAPTER I.

##### § 1. THE COURT AND ITS INFLUENCE.

THE age of Louis XIV. has been called the Augustan age of French literature, and not without sufficient reason. It was the age of maturity, both in thought and style ; the age of the classical drama, tragic and comic ; of classical prose, oratorical, historical, and didactic ; the age of excellence in a *genre* which, perhaps as distinctly as anything else, characterises the French genius in memoirs and polite correspondence ; the age of order, precision, harmony in literary ideas, of arrangement, correctness, elevation in literary expression. Manifestly the main features of an Augustan age were present here, as they had been first conspicuously assembled and illustrated under Cæsar Augustus in Rome, as they were illustrated, though with inferior force, under Queen Anne in England. But again, the reign of Louis XIV. was an age of national splendour, in the centre whereof stood a powerful autocrat, every inch a king, whose court was the most brilliant in Europe, and his capital the most refined in the world. The same king was a constant patron of the arts and of literature, and displayed, through nearly three quarters of a century,<sup>1</sup> a sumptuousness and magnificence, which ruined the country over which he reigned, but which no

<sup>1</sup> Louis XIV. reigned seventy-two years, from 1643 to 1715 ; the first eight years under the regency of his mother. He was born in 1638.

other western monarch has had the means of excelling or the power of equalling. Under him were fostered not merely letters and the arts, but also the science of pomp and ceremonial, the culture of pleasure and social intercourse, the pursuit of military glory and political power. It may be said of the *Grand Monarque* that, as it fell to his lot to inherit the legacy of the Renaissance, so he did what in him lay to develop its spirit, and to adorn the epoch in which he lived. His influence upon literature was necessarily great, as nearly every chapter of our present volume must contribute to show; but although this influence tended almost invariably to enhance the fame of literary men and of their works, it was by no means always an influence for good. The virtues of the king lie on the side of his kingliness; what he was as a man we may read in the pages of history, and the memoirs of Saint Simon shall tell us later on.<sup>1</sup>

We have already trenched considerably upon the age of Louis XIV. It was during his minority that the troubles of the Fronde broke forth, and were finally suppressed by Anne of Austria<sup>2</sup> and Cardinal Mazarin.<sup>3</sup> Voiture died in the fifth year of his reign, Descartes and Vaugelas a couple of years later, and Balzac five years after that. Louis attained his majority in 1651;<sup>4</sup> and it was in 1653 that Innocent X. condemned the five propositions extracted from the works of Jansen by his enemies, which condemnation led to the production of the *Lettres Provinciales*.<sup>5</sup> Corneille was at the height of his fame before the king ascended the throne, but his career extended over more than forty years of Louis' reign. Nevertheless it is not without sufficient reason that the age of the later classical Renaissance is carried beyond the middle of the seventeenth century, and that the age of

<sup>1</sup> Book v. ch. v. *infra*.

<sup>2</sup> 1601-1666.

<sup>3</sup> 1602-1661.

<sup>4</sup> He was declared of age by a *lit de justice*.

<sup>5</sup> See bk. iv. ch. 6, p. 140 *et passim*.

Louis XIV., in so far as it may be described as distinctively Augustan, is limited to the last fifty, or at most sixty years of his life. The *Grand Monarque* arrived at the exercise of his full royal dignities only at the death of Mazarin;<sup>1</sup> and although his mind and body were early matured, we cannot credit him with any considerable personal influence on his people before that time. If it were incumbent upon the literary historian to fix the date when the so-called Augustan age should be held to have commenced, we suppose that none more satisfactory could be selected than the year in which Molière and his *Illustre Théâtre*, newly returned from its twelve years' provincial tour, played before the young king in the *Salle des Gardes* of the Louvre,<sup>2</sup> and so pleased him, that from that time forward Louis became a generous encourager of the stage, and, by his appreciation of Molière's talent, proved himself at once a capable critic.

When we try to estimate the influence exerted by Louis XIV. upon his age, we must not overlook the fact that France, as Louis found it, was France as Richelieu and Mazarin had left it, and that the relations existing between the *Grand Monarque* and his nobles and lesser subjects were, in great measure, the necessary outcome of the first cardinal's policy. One of the most important, and not one of the most happy achievements of Richelieu was the creation of the court — of that gay and brilliant court which attracted to the capital much of the wealth and most of the intellect of France, and which, assisted by the unvarying policy of centralisation pursued by successive generations of statesmen, was to make Paris everything, and the provinces at all events unimportant by comparison. This sacrifice of the country on the shrine of Paris is the prominent fact of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in France, the pivot upon which modern French history turns; and it must also be an ever-present

<sup>1</sup> March 9th, 1661.

<sup>2</sup> October 24th, 1658.



light to the student of modern French literature. More and more from henceforth the intellectual annals of France will be found to be the intellectual annals of Paris. The verdict of a Parisian drawing-room, the acclamations of the courtiers, the smile of the king, were rewards which every Frenchman coveted, and for which he was content to resign almost all the remaining allurements of life. If a Racine was inconsolable because the king frowned upon him ; if a Molière strove and lived for the king's favour ; if a Fénelon was conspicuous as the only writer of note in his age who maintained his independence of royal approval or dislike, we may judge what must have been the tone of the elbowing crowd which danced attendance on the monarch at Versailles. And what a crowd it was ! No epoch of history has been better elucidated and illustrated than the hundred and fifty years which preceded the French Revolution, throughout the whole of which the causes which produced that cataclysm of ideas and society were continuously and steadily at work. The reigns of Louis XIV., Louis XV., and Louis XVI., have been photographed with remarkable skill,<sup>1</sup> and furnish a picture of which it is impossible to dispute the fidelity and the force. The whole condition of French society, as it was moulded and shaped by Richelieu and by the three Louis, is as familiar to the ordinary student of history as the condition of society in our own days. The king at the top of the social scale, surrounded by his privileges, claiming immunity from the duties which those privileges involved, retiring within a charmed circle of dignity and ceremonial, owning no responsibility to his subjects save through his ministers, and through these only by the observance of a rigid ceremonial, exacting all France as his property, and draining his pleasures from her miseries, making himself thus the head and centre of all abuses ;—the nobility and clergy, naturally imitating the

<sup>1</sup> See H. Taine, *Ancien Régime*, bk. i. ch. 3-4, and *passim*.

king, casting off every duty not absolutely inevitable, delegating their functions to ill-paid and inefficient subordinates, ruining their dependants in order to shine at the king's court, and ruining themselves to purchase a few years of distinction, pleasure, and royal favour, most of them persistently absent from their estates, which they leave to the irresponsible management of agents ;—and at the base of the rapidly disorganising fabric, an oppressed and overburdened populace, so ground down by the taxes necessary for the monstrous extravagance of throne and state that they have neither means nor heart to till the soil, ill housed and ill fed, losing their very independence and self-respect under the sheer inability to preserve themselves from starvation ; such, in short, is the glaring contrast afforded by French society in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

An Englishman<sup>1</sup> who travelled in France almost a hundred years before Arthur Young, gives a number of details of manners and customs about the close of the seventeenth century, which are very serviceable towards the acquisition of an adequate conception of the state of society in France, and in Paris more particularly, during the reign of Louis XIV. Though he is by no means so full or so vivid as his more celebrated countryman who pictured France on the eve of the Revolution, Dr. Lister draws faithfully from the life, and his pages reveal, clearly enough, the contrast between the hard and meagre life of the nation as a whole, and the brilliant display and luxury of its more fortunate classes. Side by side with the squalor and scanty diet of the commonalty, we are here enabled to see the gay and wasteful self-indulgence of fashionable Parisian life. In Paris our traveller found the bulk of the people living on coarse

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Martin Lister, *A Journey to Paris in the year 1698* ; it has been reprinted by Pinkerton, in his *General Collection of Voyages and Travels*, vol. iv.



brown bread and herbs, whilst the wealthier orders devoted their whole days and nights to pleasure. Take one or two sketches :—

“ Coaching in visits is the great and daily business of people of quality ; but in the evenings the Cour de la Reyne is much frequented, and a great rendezvous of people of the best fashion. The place, indeed, is very commodious and pleasant, being three alleys set with high trees, of a great length, all along the bank of the river Seine, inclosed at each end with noble gates ; and in the middle a very large circle to turn in. The middle alley holds four lines of coaches at least, and each side alley two apiece ; these eight lines of coaches may, when full, supposing them to contain near eighty coaches apiece, amount to about six or seven hundred. On the field side, joining close to the alleys of the coaches, there are several acres of meadow planted with trees, well grown, into narrow alleys in quincunx order, to walk in the grass, if any have a mind to light ; and this must needs be very agreeable in the heats of summer, which we stayed not to enjoy. One thing this Cours is short of ours in Hyde Park, for if full you cannot in an hour see the company twice you have a mind to see, and you are confined to your line, and oftentimes the princes of the blood coming in, and driving *at pleasure*, make a strange stop and embarrass.”

More than one of Molière’s plays may be located in the quincunx alleys leading to and from the Cours de la Reine ; as for instance the scenes between the two young lovers in the *Bores*. Let us follow our guide indoors to the bedroom of the Duchess of Lesdiguières at Les Diguières :—

“ In the apartment of the Duchess, which was all of her own contrivance, and had an air of state and agreeableness beyond anything I had seen, I observed hanging down in the middle of the bedchamber the finest chrystal candlestick in France : the pieces were all bought single by her, and the contrivance of setting them together was her own : it cost twelve thousand crowns. But before I left the garden, in an obscure parterre I saw the tomb of a cat, viz. a black cat couchant upon a white marble cushion, fringed with gold, and gold tassels hanging at the corners

upon a square black marble pedestal. On one of the sides of that marble is writ, in letters of gold :—

‘ Cy gist Menine la plus aimable et la  
Plus aimée de toutes les chattes.’

“ On the other side :—

‘ Cy gist une chatte jolie :  
Sa maistresse, qui n’aimoit rien,  
L’aime jusques à la folie  
Pour quoi dire ! on le voit bien.’ ”

Take, again, the character of the *Grand Monarque*, as our English traveller had it depicted for him at Marly :—

“ As for their own king, they were much in the praise of him, as one may easily imagine : that his retirement hither was mostly for his health ; that he left Versailles every Tuesday night, and came hither with a select company of lords and ladies ; that he returned not till Saturday night, and sometimes intermitted ten or fourteen days ; so that he spent half his time here in repose ; that he was the most affable prince in the world, and never out of humour, of a pleasant and open conversation where it pleased him ; easy of access, and never sent any one away discontented ; the most bountiful master in the world, of which there were ten thousand instances ; nothing of merit in any kind, but he most readily and cheerfully rewarded, ever, of late years at least, preferring the virtuous ; so on the other hand, he never spared the rebellious and obstinate ; that the government of his people could not be carried on with less severity and strictness ; nor the taxes which were necessary to support it, raised ; that he delighted not in blood or persecution ; but that the art of government had different rules, according to the climate and nature of the people where and upon whom it was to be put in practice. His great wisdom appeared in nothing more, than in preserving (*sic*) himself amidst his troops, his converts, and numerous family, all in a manner fit for the throne ; the greatness of his mind, and magnificence in his buildings. This was the sum of the discourse these gentlemen were pleased to entertain me with.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The king, “ of late years at least, preferring the virtuous ”—Louis XIV. being then sixty years old—“ and serving himself amidst his troops, his



The libraries of Paris, as described by the English visitor, were neither few nor poorly supplied, but Dr. Lister observed that "the books which were written by Protestants were locked up in wire cases, not to be come at without particular leave."

If, in the age of Louis XIV. and his successors, all France was Paris, so all Paris—that is to say, all fashionable Paris, and the whole literary life of Paris—was centred in the drawing-room. "In France, everything contributes to make the spirit of society flourish; in this the national genius accords with the political order of things, and it is as though the plant had been selected for the soil in the first instance. The Frenchman instinctively loves to find himself in company, and the reason is, that he does well and easily whatever society requires. . . . He would suffer almost as much from being rude as from encountering rudeness. . . . When we give pleasure, others like to give us pleasure, and what we give in thoughtfulness is returned to us in attentions. In such company one can converse; for to converse is to amuse others by amusing oneself, and there is no more lively pleasure for a Frenchman. Brisk and sinuous conversation is for him like the flight of a bird; from idea to idea he flits, alert, excited by the 'go' of others, with a spring, with circuits, with sudden returns, low down, on high, skimming the ground or the hill-tops, neither burying himself in holes nor impeding himself in thickets, nor seeking from the thousand objects

converts, and numerous family"—he having at that time only one legitimate child alive—require no comment. But the flattering portrait, given above, demands to be corrected by history, which is more apt to be just than complaisant. The mode whereby the intendants and tax-collectors raised the vast sums required for the expenditure of the king and his ministers, has nowhere been better explained than in Taine's *Ancien Régime*, or by Sir James Stephen, *Lectures on the History of France*, Lectures 13 and 14. And as for the mildness of the royal disposition, it would be well to read M. Henri Martin's *Histoire de France*, vol. xiii. p. 626, and on the *dragonnades* directed against the Protestants Sir John Reresby's *Travels and Memoirs*.

which he glides past anything else than the variety and pleasantness of their aspect. Thus gifted and inclined, he is fitted for a state of things which, during ten hours in the day, brought men together; the inborn temper harmonises with the social condition to bring the drawing-room to perfection. At the head of all the king sets the example."<sup>1</sup> "Louis XIV. conversed," Madame de Caylus informs us,<sup>2</sup> "perfectly. Whether he would banter or make jokes, or whether he condescended to tell a story, it was with infinite grace, a noble and refined bearing which I have seen in none but him."

The king's patronage and encouragement of letters were not confined to the exercise of his power of polite conversation, nor to the munificence with which he showered pecuniary rewards upon men distinguished in literature, science, and art. The Academy had special reason to be grateful, both to him and to Colbert, who occupied the *fauteuil* first accorded to Silhon,<sup>3</sup> and who, in 1666, established the *Académie des Sciences*.<sup>4</sup> Even the foreign ambassadors were instructed to invite, from all the countries of Europe, men of literary and artistic distinction, many of whom settled in Paris, whilst others received in their own countries substantial favours from the king of France. But it was in his own court that the patronage of Louis was most conspicuous and most influential.

"Material benefits,<sup>5</sup> the social advantages accorded to men of letters or artists, are very far from completely explaining the action exerted by Louis XIV. on the genius of his time. To the sciences he furnished with liberality the instruments of their researches and their observations: this is all that depends upon supreme power; for letters and the arts he can do, and he does, more. He offers them at his court an atmo-

<sup>1</sup> H. Taine, *l'Ancien Régime*, bk. ii. ch. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Souvenirs*, p. 108. See also Saint Simon, *Mémoires*, vol. xii. 161.

<sup>3</sup> 1596-1667.

<sup>4</sup> Mazarin, in 1648, had established an *Académie de Peinture et de Sculpture*.

<sup>5</sup> Henri Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. xiii. p. 163.



sphere which determines their development in a certain direction. He imposes upon them, in a kind of general harmony, the spirit of order, unity, gravity, tempered by the elegance which is in himself, and which is, so to speak, himself. He assumes from his throne that species of spiritual direction which an individual society had possessed, and makes himself the inheritor of the hôtel de Rambouillet, at the same time enlarging his inheritance. What an influence upon the productions of the intellect and the imagination must not have been exercised by the admission of writers and artists into that court-life in which everything breathes an air of grandeur, of taste and magnificence, in which everything at once animates, sustains, and embraces the flight of the spirit!"

## § 2. MOLIERE.

The drama attained its highest excellence and repute in the age of Louis XIV., and we should not be making a very hazardous assertion if we were to say that the literature of that epoch in France attained its height of glory in the drama. No French dramatist has excelled Molière, Corneille, and Racine; no group of authors in the seventeenth century were more brilliant, more powerful, more originaive. When we turn our eyes upon the stage for which these three wrote, we find ourselves in the full splendour of the Augustan age, in all its refinement and culture, its luxury and elegance, its strength of wit and justness of expression, its social polish and gorgeous display. Great as was the advance made by the audience of Jodelle upon the audience of the moralities and *soties*,<sup>1</sup> the advance of the court and society under the Bourbons upon the court and society under the Valois was equally

<sup>1</sup> See about Jodelle, bk. iv. ch. 4, § 2.



great. The *Grand Monarque*, listening to a masterpiece of Corneille, Molière, or Racine, surrounded by his brilliant circle of lords and ladies, represented an almost incalculable development of ceremonious culture, in idea, in apparel, and in general surroundings, since the day when, about a hundred years before, whilst the blossom of the Renaissance was barely expanded, the popinjay King Henry II. looked on at the first crude sketch of a French classical play. Stage, scenery, appointments, audience, critic, music, actors, and authors, all now bore witness to and adorned, as they were in fact the most elaborate product of, an Augustan age.

Paris up to this time had had little opportunity of knowing what true comedy was. It had had farces in abundance, not only of home growth but imported, and from Italy in particular. When Molière came before the public with his homogeneous and well-trained company, and his repertory of excellent character-sketches and comic situations, the prevailing sentiment was expressed by a member of the audience which listened to the first production of his *Précieuses Ridicules*: "Courage, Molière, this is genuine comedy!"

France had long been waiting for genuine comedy; waiting rather by an instinctive requirement of the national genius, and with an aptitude to appreciate the highest comic art as soon as it might be manifested, than with any definite conception of the exact thing that was lacking on the stage. The French nature was precisely fitted to produce and to enjoy the loftiest style of character-comedy, but no modern literature had hitherto exhibited that which Molière was to provide. The author of the *Précieuses Ridicules* and *Tartuffe* was essentially the outcome of his age, the dramatist of drawing-room life, whose genius enabled him to wed the foibles of the salon with elegant phraseology, and scenic effect with admirable poetic expression; and the contrast between his lofty and conscientious work and the puerilities and license

of the Spanish and Italian models was as marked as it was readily recognised. Yet it was no easy matter to acclimatise in France even the high style of comedy introduced by Molière, and he had to intermix it with a good many farces to make it go down. For twelve long years, leading the life of a strolling player, Molière observed and studied character; and when at last he thought himself safe from opposition, under the powerful patronage of Louis XIV., the Church, the University, the Sorbonne, and the bigotry of the statesmen—once more united as in the age of Francis I.—conspired to cast stumbling-blocks in the way of literary freedom. It was the authorities of the Church which, shocked and jealous at the enthusiasm which greeted the appearance of *Tartuffe*, brought the veto of the king to bear against the company of the Palais-Royal; and though Molière believed that his private intercession had obtained the removal of this veto, his enemies were bold and powerful enough, during the absence of Louis, on the further representation of the play, to prevent its production a second time. Molière was able to cope with his adversaries, yet it is a noteworthy fact that the decree of excommunication passed against comedians in France was not absolutely rescinded until the present century.

We do not forget that Corneille wrote comedies before Molière; and indeed there is no doubt that the youngest of the two dramatists owed something, even in comedy, to the oldest. Molière began by adapting from and imitating the Italian and Spanish comedy-writers, upon whom many of his first farces were founded; and it is not at all unlikely that he even remodelled some of the earlier *soties*. It was perhaps due to Corneille's influence as much as to anything else that his genius at last discovered its true level. He confessed to Boileau his great indebtedness to *Le Menteur*. "When it was first performed," he says, "I had already a wish to write, but was in doubt as to what it should be. My id



confused, but this piece determined them. In short, but for the appearance of *Le Menteur*, though I should no doubt have written comedies of intrigue, like *l'Etourdi* or *le Dépit amoureux*, I should perhaps never have written the *Misanthrope*." Eliminate the generosity from this confession, and no doubt the truth remains that Molière did form his best style of comedy upon the master of French tragedy.

Jean Baptiste Poquelin, who subsequently assumed the name of Molière,<sup>1</sup> was born in the year that François de Sales died, one year after the birth of La Fontaine, four years before the birth of his friend Chapelle and of Madame de Sévigné. When the *Cid* was first performed he was fourteen years old, and twenty-two at the time of the first representation of *le Menteur*. The son of a *valet de chambre tapissier* of Louis XIII., he succeeded in due course to the emoluments and honours, such as they were, of his father; but he had early conceived a passion for the stage, and in the year 1643 he attached himself to the *Illustre Théâtre* of Madeleine Béjart, a woman four years his senior. With her were already associated her brother Joseph, her sister Geneviève, about two years younger than Molière, and eight others, most of whom had dropped out of the company before its final settlement in Paris. For a year or two the *Illustre Théâtre* tempted fortune in the capital without success, and in 1646 they commenced a tour through the provinces which was destined to continue for twelve years. The debts which they had incurred weighed upon them during the whole of this time, and principally upon Molière, who was once imprisoned and several times arrested at the suit of the company's creditors. No doubt these latter had discovered that the young actor had friends who would rescue him from durance, which was done on several occasions, but as late as 1660 we read of Molière's discharging

<sup>1</sup>to the author's translation of the  
son. 1875.

probably the last of the debts for which at this period he made himself responsible.

The plays first acted by Molière and his friends were, of course, the farces then most in vogue; amongst others the comedies of Scarron, and the yet inferior productions of Denis Beys and Desfontaines. The former had written a ridiculous piece called *l'Hôpital des Fous*. The latter was the author of *Eurymédon ou l'illustre Pirate*; *l'illustre Comédien, ou le Martyre de Saint Genest*, and of several other inflated pieces. It would be difficult to fix the exact date at which Molière's earliest plays were produced, but it is probable that he began to write for his company as soon as he had enlisted in it. He seems, like Shakspeare, to have, in part at least, adapted the plays of others; but in the year 1653, if not earlier, he had produced *l'Etourdi*, and in 1656 *le Dépit amoureux*.

The *Illustre Théâtre* is heard of at Nantes, Limoges, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Narbonne, Lyons, where Molière produced his first serious attempt at high comedy in verse, *l'Etourdi*. In 1653 they played by invitation at the country-seat of the Prince de Conti, the schoolfellow of Molière. Three years later they played the *Dépit amoureux* at Beziers, during the meeting in that town of the Parliament of Languedoc. At Grenoble, in 1658, the painter Mignard, with other of his admirers, persuaded him to take his company—for he was joint-manager with Madeleine Béjart—to Paris; and this he did, after a concluding trip to Rouen. In Paris they began by playing before Philippe, Duke of Anjou, the brother of Louis XIV., who took them under his protection, and introduced them to the court. At this time the company was considerably stronger, as well as richer, than when it left Paris. There were now four ladies, Madeleine Béjart, Geneviève Béjart, Duparc, and Debrie; the two brothers Béjart—the youngest, Louis, had joined at Lyons—Duparc, Debrie, Dufresne, and Croisac, making, with Molière himself,



eleven persons. It may be concluded that their tour—or, at all events, that part of it which dated from Lyons—had been very successful; for we find that Joseph Béjart, who died early in 1659, left behind him a fortune of twenty-four thousand golden crowns. So at least we are told by the physician Guy-Patin, in a letter dated May 27, 1659; and he adds, "Is it not enough to make one believe that Peru is no longer in America, but in Paris?"

The condition of the drama in Paris at the time when Molière returned to the capital was anything but satisfactory. There were in 1658 five theatres in Paris: one at the hôtel de Bourgogne; one at the Marais; one under the patronage of Mademoiselle, daughter of Gaston, Duke of Orleans; a Spanish company; and an Italian company at the Petit Bourbon, under the managership of Torelli. It was with the first and last of these that Molière came chiefly into conflict; and it is probable that the other three were of no great account, at all events as competitors for the favour of the general public. Torelli soon found that the new comer commanded his hundreds where he himself could only count by scores, and he gave up the Petit Bourbon to Molière in 1659.

Molière's company called themselves *Comédiens de Monsieur*; and after Torelli had left them full possession of the Petit Bourbon, their greatest rivals in public favour were the company at the hôtel de Bourgogne, who played Corneille, Scudéry, Scarron, and other authors of less note. In 1659 Molière took the town by storm with his *Précieuses Ridicules*, a satire in one act on the exaggerations of the hôtel de Rambouillet. This was followed in the succeeding year by *Sganarelle ou Le Cocu Imaginaire*; in the beginning of 1661 appeared *Don Garcie de Navarre*, a heroic piece in five acts, intended to delineate the evils of passionate jealousy; and in 1662 were produced *l'École des Maris*, a satire on



unreasonable jealousy, and *Les Fâcheux*, a court sketch of several kinds of bores; in 1662 *l'École des Femmes*, an attempt to show the danger of bringing girls up in too strict a manner, with its sequel, the *Critique de l'École des Femmes*, in the year after. Boursault,<sup>1</sup> an amiable man, but a mediocre playwright, envious of Molière's growing fame, wrote for the hôtel de Bourgogne, which eagerly accepted, if it did not bespeak his piece, *Le Portrait du Peintre ou la Contre-critique de l'École des Femmes*, in which he attempted to bring his brother-author into ridicule; but Molière took ample revenge in his *Impromptu de Versailles*, in which he soundly lashed his rivals; though it may be mentioned to his honour that it was never printed during his lifetime. In 1664 he wrote the *Mariage Forcé*, a one-act piece with eight *entrées de ballet*, specially designed for court representation, in which the king himself was pleased to dance; and, a month or two later, the *Princesse d'Elide*, a cumbrous and comparatively inferior production, done in great haste at the command of Louis XIV., who had determined upon an eight days' festival in honour of Louise de la Vallière.

It was during these festivities that, for the first time, was represented the three first acts of Molière's masterpiece, *Tartuffe ou l'Imposteur*, a play well worthy of the best and most legitimate subject which satire can have to deal with. Nothing can be fairer or more appropriate than that the art which consists in feigning a representation of real life on the stage should take, as the butt of its ridicule and the object of its skill, the man whose whole life and character are engaged in feigning the possession of virtue, and seeming to be that which he is not. The earliest satirists and dramatists have seized on the topic with avidity; and to go no farther out of our way than Molière's predecessors in France, we may mention the authors of the romance of *Reynard the Fox*, Rutebeuf,

<sup>1</sup> 1638-1701.

Jean de Meung, the author of the *Farce des Brus*, Regnier, Scarron, even Pascal. Very various, no doubt, are the hypocritical types encountered in the works of these and other satirists; but all must necessarily have a certain amount of family likeness, and many a hereditary trait is recognised as common to at least two, if not to all of the race. "Molière gives us the hypocrite by nature, the man who would be a canting scoundrel even if it did not 'pay'; who cannot help being so; who is a human being, and therefore not perfect; who is a man, and thus sensually inclined; who employs certain means to subdue his passions, and to become a 'whited sepulchre,' but who gives all the more way to them when he imagines that he can do so with impunity." Tartuffe, who ought to be bound to Orgon by the strongest ties of gratitude, allows the son to be turned out of the house by his father, because the latter will not believe the accusations brought against the hypocrite—tries to seduce his benefactor's wife, to marry his daughter by a first marriage; and finally, after having obtained all his dupe's property, betrays him to the king as a criminal against the state. The *dénouement* of the play is that Tartuffe himself is led to prison, and that vice is for the nonce punished on the stage as it deserves to be.<sup>1</sup> We shall give one scene of Molière as a specimen of his skill, namely the one in which Tartuffe declares his love to Elmire, Orgon's wife, whilst Damis, the latter's son, is secretly present during the conversation:—

*Tartuffe.* May Heaven for ever in its mighty goodness,  
Bestow upon you health of soul and body,  
And bless your days as much as can desire  
The humblest among those its love directs!

*Elmire.* I'm much obliged for such a pious wish.  
But let us sit—we shall be more at ease.

*Tartuffe (seated).* Are you recovered quite from the attack?

<sup>1</sup> See the Introductory Notice to *Tartuffe*, in my edition of Molière, vol. iv. p. 97, *et passim*.

*Elmire.* Yes, quite ; and very soon the fever left me.

*Tartuffe.* My prayers have not sufficient influence  
To have drawn down this gracious gift from high ;  
But no devout entreaties were sent up  
Unless they asked for your recovery.

*Elmire.* You are too anxious in your zeal for me.

*Tartuffe.* We cannot cherish your dear health too much ;  
And to restore it, I would give my own.

*Elmire.* That's pushing Christian charity too far ;  
And I feel much indebted for this kindness.

*Tartuffe.* I do much less for you than you deserve.

*Elmire.* I wished in private to converse with you,  
And am quite glad that none observes us here.

*Tartuffe.* I, too, am charmed ; and doubtless feel it sweet,  
Dear madam, to be here alone with you.  
I have asked from Heaven this opportunity,  
But until now it was not granted me.

*Elmire.* All that I wish is a few words with you,  
In which you'll bare your heart and nothing hide.

*Tartuffe.* And in return, as no uncommon favour,  
I'll bare before you my entire soul,  
And swear to you that the reports I've spread  
Of visitors attracted by your charms  
Are not inspired by a dislike for you,  
But rather by a fit of passionate zeal,  
And pure designs. . .

*Elmire.* I therefore take it well,  
And think my welfare causes you concern.

*Tartuffe* (*taking Elmire's hand and pressing her fingers*). No doubt,  
dear madam, and my warmth is such . . .

*Elmire.* You squeeze too hard !

*Tartuffe.* 'Tis through excess of zeal  
I never meant to give you any pain,  
And I much sooner would . . . (*He places his hand on  
Elmire's knee*).

*Elmire.* What does there your hand ?

*Tartuffe.* I feel your dress ; the stuff is very soft.

*Elmire.* Oh ! pray desist, the least thing tickles me.

(*Elmire pushes her chair back, and Tartuffe draws near with his.*)



*Tartuffe* (*handling the collar of Elmire*). Bless me! What wondrous skill this lace displays,

They work miraculously now-a-days.

Ne'er did they do so well, in anything.

*Elmire*. True. But about our business let us talk ;

They say my husband, breaking from his word,

Gives you his daughter. Tell me, is this true ?

*Tartuffe*. He dropp'd a hint ; but, madam, sooth to say,

That's not the happiness for which I am sighing ;

And elsewhere I behold those wondrous charms

Source of the bliss for which alone I long.

*Elmire*. I trow you do not care for earthly things.

*Tartuffe*. My breast does not contain a heart of stone.

*Elmire*. For me, I think your sighs tend all to heaven,

And that nought here below stays your desires.

*Tartuffe*. The love which sways us for eternal beauties

Does not prevent the love of earthly things :

The works which heaven itself has perfect made,

Delight our senses, and that easily ;

In such as you shine its reflected charms ;

In you alone it shows its rarest wonders ;

Upon your face such beauties are diffused

As dazzle every eye, win every heart ;

And I could not behold you, perfect creature,

Without in you admiring nature's Author,

And feel my heart inflamed with burning love

For his best image painted by Himself.

At first I was afraid this secret ardour

Was but a cunning snare of the foul fiend !

I even resolved then to avoid your presence,

Deeming you stayed the work of my salvation.

But I found out, at last, O ! lovely beauty,

That no guilt need attach to this my passion,

Which I can reconcile with modesty ;

And this has made me yield my heart to it.

'Tis, I confess, an act of arrant boldness

That I dare make the offer of my heart ;

But in your goodness all my hopes are placed,

Not in weak efforts that myself can make.

In you rests all my hope, my welfare, peace,  
On you depends my torment or my bliss ;  
In short, by your sole sentence I shall be  
Happy or not, just as it pleases you.

*Elmire.* I own the avowal to be most gallant,  
But, truth to say, it takes me by surprise.  
Methinks you should more strongly arm your heart,  
And well consider such a bold design.  
A pious man like you, and so well known . . .

*Tartuffe.* I am not less a man for being pious ;  
And when one contemplates your heavenly charms,  
The heart is captive ta'en, and reasons not.  
I know such speech from me must strange appear ;  
But, madam, after all, I'm not an angel ;  
And, if you blame the avowal I have made,  
You must condemn your own attractive charms.  
When I beheld their superhuman brightness,  
That very moment you became my queen ;  
Th' unheard-of sweetness of your looks divine  
Broke down my stubborn and resisting heart ;  
It overcame my fasts, and pray'rs, and tears,  
And led all my desires towards your charms.  
My looks, my sighs, said so a thousand times ;  
And now, by speech, I make my meaning clear.  
That you would view with soul a little kind  
The sufferings of your unworthy slave ;  
If you would kindly grant some consolation,  
And deign to stoop low as my nothingness,  
For you, sweet marvel, I shall ever feel,  
Devotion which no other equalled yet.  
Your honour runs no risk with me at all,  
Need fear no shame from any act of mine.  
These courtly gallants, on whom women doat,  
Are noisy in their deeds, boast in their speech ;  
On their success they often plume themselves ;  
They bruit about the favours they receive ;  
They indiscreetly betray confidence,  
And desecrate the altar of their love.  
But men like us burn with a prudent flame,



With us for ever secrecy is safe.  
 The care we take of our own reputation  
 Secures from every chance her whom we love ;  
 With us they find, when they accept our hearts,  
 Love without scandal, pleasure without fear.

*Elmire.* I listen'd to your speech ; your special pleading  
 Has pretty well explained itself to me.  
 But are you not afraid that I may choose  
 To tell my husband of this gallant ardour,  
 And that the sudden tiding of such love  
 May change the friendship which he feels for you ?

*Tartuffe.* I know that you possess so great a kindness,  
 That you will pardon my temerity ;  
 That you'll excuse, because of human frailty,  
 The violent transports of offending passion,  
 That you'll bethink, by looking at yourself,  
 That people are not blind, and men are flesh and blood.

*Elmire.* Others perhaps might take it differently ;  
 But my discretion here shall show itself ;  
 I shall not tell the matter to my husband ;  
 But, in return, I'll something ask of you :  
 To forward honestly, and without quibbling,  
 The union of Valère with Mariane,  
 And to renounce the unjust power, which would  
 Enrich you with another's property.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "*Tartuffe.* Que le ciel à jamais, par sa toute-bonté,  
 Et de l'âme et du corps vous donne la santé,  
 Et bénisse vos jours autant que le désire  
 Le plus humble de ceux que son amour inspire !

*Elmire.* Je suis fort obligée à ce souhait pieux.  
 Mais prenons une chaise, afin d'être un peu mieux.

*Tartuffe (assis).* Comment de votre mal vous sentez-vous remise ?

*Elmire (assise).* Fort bien ; et cette fièvre a bientôt quitté prise.

*Tartuffe.* Mes prières n'ont pas le mérite qu'il faut  
 Pour avoir attiré cette grace d'en haut ;  
 Mais je n'ai fait au ciel nulle dévote instance  
 Qui n'ait eu pour objet votre convalescence.

*Elmire.* Votre zèle pour moi s'est trop inquiété.

*Tartuffe.* On ne peut trop chérir votre chère santé ;  
 Et, pour la rétablir, j'aurois donné la mienne.

*Elmire.* C'est pousser bien avant la charité chrétienne ;

*Tartuffe* made many enemies for Molière, especially amongst the clergy, who were not afraid of being twitted with their too ready application to themselves of the moral of the

Et je vous dois beaucoup pour toutes ces bontés.

*Tartuffe.* Je fais bien moins pour vous que vous ne méritez.

*Elmire.* J'ai voulu vous parler en secret d'une affaire,  
Et suis bien aise, ici, qu'aucun ne nous éclaire.

*Tartuffe.* J'en suis ravi de même ; et, sans doute, il m'est doux,  
Madame, de me voir seul à seul avec vous.  
C'est une occasion qu'au ciel j'ai demandée,  
Sans que, jusqu'à cette heure, il me l'ait accordée.

*Elmire.* Pour moi, ce que je veux, c'est un mot d'entretien,  
Où tout votre cœur s'ouvre, et ne me cache rien.

*Tartuffe.* Et je ne veux aussi, pour grâce singulière,  
Que montrer à vos yeux mon âme tout entière,  
Et vous faire serment que les bruits que j'ai faits  
Des visites qu'ici reçoivent vos attraits  
Ne sont pas envers vous l'effet d'aucune haine,  
Mais plutôt d'un transport de zèle qui m'entraîne,  
Et d'un pur mouvement. . .

*Elmire.* Je le prends bien aussi,  
Et crois que mon salut vous donne ce souci.

*Tartuffe.* Oui, madame, sans doute ; et ma ferveur est telle. . .

*Elmire.* Ouf ! vous me serrez trop.

*Tartuffe.* C'est par excès de zèle.  
De vous faire aucun mal je n'eus jamais dessein,  
Et j'aurois bien plutôt. . .

*Elmire.* Que fait là votre main ?

*Tartuffe.* Je tâte votre habit : l'étoffe en est moelleuse.

*Elmire.* Ah ! de grace, laissez, je suis fort chatouilleuse.

*Tartuffe* (*maniant le fichu d'Elmire*). Mon Dieu ! que de ce point l'ouvrage est merveilleux !

On travaille aujourd'hui d'un air miraculeux :  
Jamais, en tout chose, on n'a vu si bien faire.

*Elmire.* Il est vrai. Mais parlons un peu de notre affaire.  
On tient que mon mari veut dégager sa foi,  
Et vous donner sa fille. Est-il vrai ? dites-moi.

*Tartuffe.* Il m'en a dit dit deux mots : mais, madame, à vrai dire,  
Ce n'est pas le bonheur après quoi je soupire ;  
Et je vois autre part les merveilleux attraits  
De la félicité qui fait tous mes souhaits.

*Elmire.* C'est que vous n'aimez rien des choses de la terre.

*Tartuffe.* Mon sein n'enferme pas un cœur qui soit de pierre.

*Elmire.* Pour moi, je crois qu'au ciel tendent tous vos soupirs,  
Et que rien ici-bas n'arrête vos désirs.

*Tartuffe.* L'amour qui nous attache aux beautés éternelles

play. It was prohibited in 1664 ; and some zealous clergymen even went so far as to write treatises which they hoped

N'étouffe pas en nous l'amour des temporelles :  
 Nos sens facilement peuvent être charmés  
 Des ouvrages parfaits que le ciel a formés.  
 Ses attraita réfléchis brillent dans vos pareilles ;  
 Mais il étale en vous ses plus rares merveilles :  
 Il a sur votre face épanché des beautés  
 Dont les yeux sont surpris, et les cœurs transportés ;  
 Et je n'ai pu vous voir, parfaite créature,  
 Sans admirer en vous l'auteur de la nature,  
 Et d'une ardente amour sentir mon cœur atteint,  
 Au plus beau des portraits où lui-même il s'est peint.  
 D'abord j'appréhendai que cette ardeur secrète  
 Ne fût du noir esprit une surprise adroite ;  
 Et même à fuir vos yeux mon cœur se résolut,  
 Vous croyant un obstacle à faire mon salut.  
 Mais enfin je connus, ô beauté tout aimable,  
 Que cette passion peut n'être point coupable,  
 Que je puis l'ajuster avecque la pudeur,  
 Et c'est ce qui m'y fait abandonner mon cœur.  
 Ce m'est, je le confesse, une audace bien grande  
 Que d'oser de ce cœur vous adresser l'offrande ;  
 Mais j'attends en mes vœux tout de votre bonté,  
 Et rien des vains efforts de mon infirmité.  
 En vous est mon espoir, mon bien, ma quiétude ;  
 De vous dépend ma peine ou ma béatitude ;  
 Et je vais être enfin, par votre seul arrêt,  
 Heureux, si vous voulez ; malheureux, s'il vous plaît.

*Elmire.* La déclaration est tout à fait galante ;  
 Mais elle est, à vrai dire, un peu bien surprenante.  
 Vous deviez, ce me semble, armer mieux votre sein,  
 Et raisonner un peu sur un pareil dessein.

Un dévot comme vous, et que partout on nomme . . .  
*Tartuffe.* Ah ! pour être dévot, je n'en suis pas moins homme :  
 Et, lorsqu'on vient à voir vos célestes appas,  
 Un cœur se laisse prendre, et ne raisonne pas.  
 Je sais qu'un tel discours de moi paroît étrange :  
 Mais, madame, après tout, je ne suis pas un ange ;  
 Et, si vous condamnez l'aveu que je vous fais,  
 Vous devez vous en prendre à vos charmants attraita  
 Dès que j'en vis briller la splendeur plus qu'humaine,  
 De mon intérieur vous fûtes souveraine ;  
 De vos regards divins l'ineffable douceur  
 Força la résistance où s'obstinoit mon cœur ;  
 Elle surmonta tout, jeûnes, prières, larmes,

would counteract the effects of the dramatist's works. For their own sakes we may hope that they did not succeed.

Et tourna tous mes vœux du côté de vos charmes.  
 Mes yeux et mes soupirs vous l'ont dit mille fois ;  
 Et, pour mieux m'expliquer, j'emploie ici la voix.  
 Que si vous contemplez, d'une ame un peu bénigne,  
 Les tribulations de votre esclave indigne ;  
 S'il faut que vos bontés veuillent me consoler,  
 Et jusqu'à mon néant daignent se ravalier,  
 J'aurai toujours pour vous, ô suave merveille,  
 Une dévotion à nulle autre pareille.  
 Votre honneur avec moi ne court point de hasard,  
 Et n'a nulle disgrâce à craindre de ma part.  
 Tous ces galants de cour, dont les femmes sont folles,  
 Sont bruyants dans leurs faits et vains dans leurs paroles ;  
 De leurs progrès sans cesse on les voit se targuer ;  
 Ils n'ont point de faveurs qu'ils n'aillent divulguer ;  
 Et leur langue indiscreète, en qui l'on se confie,  
 Déshonore l'autel où leur cœur sacrifie.  
 Mais les gens comme nous brûlent d'un feu discret,  
 Avec qui, pour toujours, on est sûr du secret.  
 Le soin que nous prenons de notre renommée  
 Répond de toute chose à la personne aimée ;  
 Et c'est en nous qu'on trouve, acceptant notre cœur,  
 De l'amour sans scandale, et du plaisir sans peur.

*Elmire.* Je vous écoute dire, et votre rhétorique  
 En termes assez forts à mon ame s'explique.  
 N'appréhendez-vous point que je ne sois d'humeur  
 A dire à mon mari cette galante ardeur,  
 Et que le prompt avis d'un amour de la sorte  
 Ne pût bien altérer l'amitié qu'il vous porte ?

*Tartuffe.* Je sais que vous avez trop de bénignité,  
 Et que vous ferez grace à ma témérité ;  
 Que vous m'excuserez, sur l'humaine foiblesse,  
 Des violents transports d'un amour qui vous blesse,  
 Et considérez, en regardant votre air,  
 Que l'on n'est pas aveugle, et qu'un homme est de chair.

*Elmire.* D'autres prendroient cela d'autre façon peut-être ;  
 Mais ma discrétion se veut faire paroître.  
 Je ne redirai point l'affaire à mon époux ;  
 Mais je veux, en revanche, une chose de vous :  
 C'est de presser tout franc, et sans nulle chicane,  
 L'union de Valère avecque Mariane,  
 De renoncer vous-même à l'injuste pouvoir  
 Qui veut du bien d'un autre enrichir votre es-



The king was not strong enough to withstand the influence of the clergy, and did not venture at once to remove the interdict. The relaxation did not take place until five years later. But it was at this time that Louis XIV. bestowed on Molière's company the name of *Comédiens du Roi*; and the troop was subsidised by a yearly pension of seven thousand livres.

*Don Juan ou le Festin de Pierre*, a piece in which a nobleman, who is a libertine as well as a sceptic and a hypocrite, is brought upon the stage, was first acted in February 1665, and raised such an outcry that it was also forbidden to be played. In spite of failing health and serious depression of spirits, Molière continued to produce play after play; and some of his best and most admired were the fruits of his most unhappy moments. Early in the year 1662 he had married Armande Béjart, the youngest sister of Madeleine Béjart, who was about twenty years younger than her husband. It was apparently a marriage of mutual affection; but it can hardly be said to have been a fortunate one for either. Armande loved admiration from whatever source, and indulged in pleasures which her husband could not share. The breach between them gradually widened, and it was not till 1671 that their friends brought about a better understanding between them. Meanwhile, in September 1665, appeared *L'Amour Médecin*, a comedy in three acts, in which a lover appears disguised as a physician, to cure the object of his love, who pretends to be dumb, and in which Molière makes his first serious attack against the doctors. It was only acted a few times when the theatre had to be closed on account of the author's illness; and the death of Anne of Austria in the spring of 1666 delayed its reopening until June of that year. It was then that the *Misanthrope* was introduced to the public—a play which has been ranked as high in comedy as *Athalie* in tragedy. The circumstances under which



it was written were such as might almost warrant us in calling it a tragedy ; for the great satirist, who had spent his life in copying the eccentricities of others, had now employed the season of his illness to commit to paper a drama in which he was himself the principal actor. The misanthrope Alceste loves the coquette Célimène, almost against his will ; and we can imagine the feelings with which Molière himself took the rôle of Alceste to his wife's Célimène. Let us give one scene,<sup>1</sup> in which the workings of love and jealousy are finely shown:—

*Alceste.* O Heaven ! how can I control here my passion ?

*Célimène (aside).* Ah ! (*to Alceste*) What's this trouble which you clearly show ?

And what's the meaning of those long-drawn sighs,  
And those black looks which you direct upon me ?

*Alceste.* That all the horrid deeds one can conceive  
Will not compare to your perfidious conduct ;  
That neither fate, nor hell, nor heaven in wrath  
Has e'er produced a thing so false as you are.

*Célimène.* These pretty things I surely much admire.

*Alceste.* Ah ! do not jest, this is no time for laughing.  
Indeed blush rather ; for you've cause to do so !  
And of your treachery I've the clearest proofs.  
That's what the emotions of my heart forebode ;  
'Twas not in vain my love was seized with fear ;  
You thought it odious when I oft suspected,  
And sought that evil which my eyes have seen ;  
Spite all your care and your deceitful skill,  
My star foretold me what I had to fear ;  
But don't imagine that, without revenge,  
I'll bear the slight of being thus insulted.  
I know we cannot rule our inclinations ;  
That love spontaneously springs everywhere ;  
That there's no entering a heart by force,

<sup>1</sup> *The Misanthrope*, Act iv. scene 3. Part of this scene Molière had already used in *Don Garcie de Navarre*.

And that each soul may freely name its victor ;  
Thus I'd no reason to complain at all,  
If you had spoken to me openly,  
And had disdained my love when it sprang up ;  
My heart would then have only blamed its luck.  
But to fan my affection by deceit,  
Is such a treachery, such perfidy,  
That nothing I can do is too severe ;  
And my resentment may do anything :  
Yes, yes, dread everything for such an outrage.  
I am beside myself ; I'm mad with rage.  
Pierced by the deadly blow which you have dealt me  
My senses are no longer swayed by reason ;  
I yield to th' outbursts of a righteous wrath,  
And do not answer what I may not do.

*Célimène.* Whence comes, I pray you, such a fit of passion ?  
Tell me, are all your senses wholly gone ?

*Alceste.* Yes, yes, I lost them when I first beheld you,  
And thus, to my misfortune, took the poison,  
And when I thought to find sincerity  
In those deceitful charms that have bewitched me.

*Célimène.* And of what treach'ry have you to complain ?

*Alceste.* Ah ! what deceit ! how well she can dissemble !  
But, to confound her, I've the means at hand,  
Cast your eyes here, and recognise your writing ;  
This picked-up note suffices to condemn you,  
And such proof cannot lightly be refuted . . .

*Célimène.* If this note to a woman be addressed,  
How can it hurt you, and where is the guilt ?

*Alceste.* Ah ! this is good, the excuse is marvellous.  
I must confess this turn is unexpected,  
And now I am convinced, and wholly so.  
Dare you employ such ordinary tricks ?  
And do you think me so bereft of sense ?  
Come, let us hear how far, and with what air,  
You will support so palpable a falsehood ;  
And how you can apply to any woman  
Those loving words found in this very note ?

Explain away, to hide your broken vows,  
What I will read. . .

*Célimène.* It does not suit me now.

'Tis most ridiculous to lord it thus,  
And to my face say what you dare to me !

*Alceste.* No, don't fly in a rage, but take some pains,  
To justify the words which I see here.

*Célimène.* No, I shall not act thus ; on this occasion  
It matters nought to me what you believe.

*Alceste.* Pray, show me, and I shall be satisfied,  
If this note can be meant for any woman.

*Célimène.* No, it was for Oronte ; you may believe so ;  
All his attentions gladly I accept,  
I admire what he says, I like him much,  
And shall agree to whatever you please.  
Do what you will ; let nothing hinder you,  
But let my thoughts be undisturbed by you.

*Alceste (aside).* O, Heavens ! can aught more cruel be conceived ?  
Was e'er a heart treated in such a way ?  
What ! with just anger I am moved against her,  
I come to blame, and am myself attacked !  
My grief and my suspicions are excited,  
I credit all ; she boasts of everything ;  
And yet my heart is cowardly enough  
Not to tear off the bonds which hold it fast,  
Not to put on a generous contempt  
For the ungrateful object of its flame.

*(To Célimène.)* Ah, treacherous woman ! but too well you  
know

To take advantage of my utmost weakness,  
And to employ the excessive, fatal love,  
So wondrously born of your treach'rous eyes.  
Defend yourself from this o'erwhelming crime,  
And cease to feign that you are culpable.  
Prove, if you're able, that this note is blameless ;  
My love consents to lend a helping hand.  
Though without faith yet put its semblance on,  
And I'll endeavour to believe you such.

*Célimène.* Bah! you are mad with all these jealous frenzies,  
And don't deserve the love I have for you.  
I should much like to know what could compel me  
To stoop for you to such a base pretence;  
Why, if my heart inclined towards another,  
Should I not say so with sincerity?  
What! I avow the love I feel for you,  
Yet your suspicions are not all allayed!  
They ought to have no weight, with such a warrant.  
Does it not wrong me to attend to them?  
And since we hardly dare confess our love,  
And since our sex, hostile to lovers' passion,  
To such avowals is so much opposed,  
Should not a lover suffer who can doubt  
When such an obstacle is overcome?  
And is his guilt not clear, who is not sure  
That we speak truth, at such a bitter cost?  
Go! these suspicions well deserve my anger;  
And you're not worthy I should care for you.  
I wrong myself in my simplicity,  
Still to preserve the smallest kindness for you,  
I ought elsewhere to place all my affections,  
And give you lawful cause for your complaints.

*Alceste.* Ah, traitress! strange the weakness you inspire;  
Your sweet expressions are no doubt deceptive;  
It matters not, I must accept my fate;  
My very soul is wholly wrapt in you;  
And to the very end I'll prove your heart,  
And see if it be black enough to cheat me.

*Célimène.* No, you don't love me as you ought to love.

*Alceste.* Nothing can be compared to my deep love;  
And, in its haste to show itself to all,  
It e'en forms wishes 'gainst your lovely self.  
Yes, I could wish no one to think you handsome,  
That you were plunged in abject misery;  
That Heaven had given you nothing, at your birth;  
That you had had nor rank, nor birth, nor wealth;  
So that the public proffer of my heart



Might make amends for so unjust a lot ;  
That I might then possess the joy and glory  
To see you owe it all to my affection. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Alceste (à part)*. O ciel ! de mes transports puis-je être ici le maître ?  
*Célimène (à part)*. Ouais ! (*à Alceste*) Quel est donc le trouble où je vous vois paroître ?

Et que me veulent dire, et ces soupirs poussés,  
Et ces sombres regards que sur moi vous lancez ?

*Alceste*. Que toutes les horreurs dont une ame est capable  
A vos déloyautés n'ont rien de comparable ;  
Que le sort, les démons, et le ciel en courroux,  
N'ont jamais rien produit de si méchant que vous.

*Célimène*. Voilà certainement des douceurs que j'admire.

*Alceste*. Ah ! ne plaisantez point, il n'est pas temps de rire.  
Rougissez bien plutôt, vous en avez raison ;  
Et j'ai de sûrs témoins de votre trahison.  
Voilà ce que marquoient les troubles de mon ame ;  
Ce n'étoit pas en vain que s'alarmoit ma flamme ;  
Par ces fréquents soupçons qu'on trouvoit odieux,  
Je cherchois le malheur qu'ont rencontré mes yeux ;  
Et, malgré tous vos soins et votre adresse à feindre,  
Mon astre me disoit ce que j'avois à craindre  
Mais ne présumez pas que, sans être vengé,  
Je souffre le dépit de me voir outragé.  
Je sais que sur les vœux on n'a point de puissance,  
Que l'amour veut partout naître sans dépendance,  
Que jamais par la force on n'entra dans un cœur,  
Et que toute ame est libre à nommer son vainqueur.  
Aussi ne trouverois-je aucun sujet de plainte,  
Si pour moi votre bouche avoit parlé sans feinte ;  
Et, rejetant mes vœux dès le premier abord,  
Mon cœur n'auroit eu droit de s'en prendre qu'au sort.  
Mais d'un aveu trompeur voir ma flamme applaudie,  
C'est une trahison, c'est une perfidie,  
Qui ne sauroit trouver de trop grands châtimens ;  
Et je puis tout permettre à mes ressentimens.  
Oui, oui, redoutez tout après un tel outrage ;  
Je ne suis plus à moi, je suis tout à la rage.  
Percé du coup mortel dont vous m'assassinez,  
Mes sens par la raison ne sont plus gouvernés ;  
Je cède aux mouvemens d'une juste colère,  
Et je ne réponds pas de ce que je puis faire.

*Célimène*. D'où vient donc, je vous prie, un tel emportement ?  
Avez-vous, dites-moi, perdu le jugement ?



A second play, the *Médecin malgré Lui*, was produced in 1666, and the pretty operetta of the *Sicilien* followed early in the next year. An abortive attempt was made to re-introduce

- Alceste.* Oui, oui, je l'ai perdu, lorsque dans votre vue  
J'ai pris, pour mon malheur, le poison qui me tue,  
Et que j'ai cru trouver quelque sincérité  
Dans les traîtres appas dont je fus enchanté.
- Célimène.* De quelle trahison pouvez-vous donc vous plaindre ?
- Alceste.* Ah ! que ce cœur est double, et sait bien l'art de feindre !  
Mais, pour le mettre à bout, j'ai des moyens tout prêts.  
Jetez ici les yeux, et connoissez vos traits ;  
Ce billet découvert suffit pour vous confondre,  
Et contre ce témoin on n'a rien à répondre.
- Célimène.* Mais si c'est une femme à qui va ce billet,  
En quoi vous blesse-t-il, et qu'a-t-il de coupable ?
- Alceste.* Ah ! le détour est bon, et l'excuse admirable.  
Je ne m'attendois pas, je l'avoue, à ce trait  
Et me voilà par là convaincu tout à fait.  
Osez-vous recourir à ces ruses grossières ?  
Et croyez-vous les gens si privés de lumières ?  
Voyons, voyons, un peu par quel biais, de quel air,  
Vous voulez soutenir un mensonge si clair ;  
Et comment vous pourrez tourner pour une femme,  
Tous les mots d'un billet qui montre tant de flamme.  
Ajustez, pour couvrir un manquement de foi,  
Ce que je m'en vais lire. . . .
- Célimène.* Il ne me plaît pas, moi.  
Je vous trouve plaisant d'user d'un tel empire  
Et de me dire au nez ce que vous m'osez dire !
- Alceste.* Non, non, sans s'emporter, prenez un peu souci  
De me justifier les termes que voici.
- Célimène.* Non, je n'en veux rien faire ; et, dans cette occurrence,  
Tout ce que vous croirez m'est de peu d'importance.
- Alceste.* De grace, montrez-moi, je serai satisfait,  
Qu'on peut, pour une femme, expliquer ce billet.
- Célimène.* Non, il est pour Oronte ; et je veux qu'on le croie.  
Je reçois tous ses soins avec beaucoup de joie,  
J'admire ce qu'il dit, j'estime ce qu'il est,  
Et je tombe d'accord de tout ce qu'il vous plaît.  
Faites, prenez parti ; que rien ne vous arrête,  
Et ne me rompez pas davantage la tête.
- Alceste (à part).* Ciel ! rien de plus tre inventé,  
Et jamais cœur fut  
Quoi ! d'un juste  
C'est moi qui n

*Tartuffe* in 1667, during the absence of Louis on his Flanders campaign, but it ended in a renewed prohibition. *Amphitryon*, which has the gross plot of a wife mistaking Jupiter for her

On pousse ma douleur et mes soupçons à bout,  
On me laisse tout croire, on fait gloire de tout ;  
Et cependant mon cœur est encore assez lâche  
Pour ne pouvoir briser la chaîne qui l'attache,  
Et pour ne pas s'armer d'un généreux mépris  
Contre l'ingrat objet dont il est trop épris !  
Ah ! (à *Célimène*) que vous savez bien ici contre moi-même,  
Perfide, vous servir de ma faiblesse extrême,  
Et ménager pour vous l'excès prodigieux  
De ce fatal amour né de vos traîtres yeux !  
Défendez-vous au moins d'un crime qui m'accable,  
Et cessez d'affecter d'être envers moi coupable.  
Rendez-moi, s'il se peut, ce billet innocent ;  
A vous prêter les mains ma tendresse consent.  
Efforcez-vous ici de paroître fidèle,  
Et je m'efforcerai, moi, de vous croire telle.

*Célimène.* Allez, vous êtes fou dans vos transports jaloux,  
Et ne méritez pas l'amour qu'on a pour vous.  
Je voudrois bien savoir qui pourroit me contraindre  
A descendre pour vous aux bassesses de feindre ;  
Et pourquoi, si mon cœur penchoit d'autre côté,  
Je ne le dirois pas avec sincérité !  
Quoi ! de mes sentiments l'obligeante assurance  
Contre tous vos soupçons ne prend pas ma défense ?  
Auprès d'un tel garant sont-ils de quelque poids ?  
N'est-ce pas m'outrager que d'écouter leur voix ?  
Et puisque notre cœur fait un effort extrême  
Lorsqu'il peut se résoudre à confesser qu'il aime ;  
Puisque l'honneur du sexe, ennemi de nos feux,  
S'oppose fortement à de pareils aveux,  
L'amant qui voit pour lui franchir un tel obstacle  
Doit-il impunément douter de cet oracle ?  
Et n'est-il pas coupable, en ne s'assurant pas  
A ce qu'on ne dit point qu'après de grands combats ?  
Allez, de tels soupçons méritent ma colère ;  
Et vous ne valez pas que l'on vous considère.  
Je suis sotte, et veux mal à ma simplicité  
De conserver encor pour vous quelque bonté ;  
Je devrois autre part attacher mon estime,  
Et vous faire un sujet de plainte légitime.  
*Alceste.* Ah ! traîtresse ! mon foible est étrange pour vous ;  
Vous me trompez, sans doute, avec des mots si doux ;

husband ; *George Dandin*, which shows the danger of a commoner marrying a lady of noble birth, and in which I strongly suspect Molière gave vent to some of his feelings about his wife, though putting them purposely in the mouth of a ridiculous personage ; and *l'Avare*, based on Plautus, in which the frightful consequences of avarice, and its dissolving influences on family bonds, are exposed, successively occupied the stage in 1668. In the following year the king, growing more independent of his advisers, sanctioned the production of *Tartuffe* ; but this strengthening of his repertory did not prevent Molière producing *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*, a farcical comedy in three acts, in which there is a masterly and not exaggerated sketch of a consultation of doctors in Molière's time ; and, in 1670, the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, in which the folly of aping noblemen is delineated, as well as the *Amants Magnifiques*, a comedy-ballet for the particular behoof of the court. In 1671 he combined with Corneille and Quinault in the production of *Psyché*, a tragedy-ballet, and wrote, or rather, perhaps, remodelled from amongst his earlier efforts, the *Fourberies de Scapin* and the *Comtesse d'Escarbagnas*. His two last works were amongst the highest and happiest creations of his genius—the *Femmes Savantes*, a sort

Mais il n'importe, il faut suivre ma destinée ;  
 A votre foi mon ame est tout abandonnée ;  
 Je veux voir jusqu'au bout quel sera votre cœur,  
 Et si de me trahir il aura la noirceur.

*Célimène.* Non, vous ne m'aimez point comme il faut que l'on aime.

*Alceste.* Ah ! rien n'est comparable à mon amour extrême ;  
 Et dans l'ardeur qu'il a de se montrer à tous,  
 Il va jusqu'à former des souhaits contre vous.  
 Oui, je voudrois qu'aucun ne vous trouvât aimable,  
 Que vous fussiez réduite en un sort misérable ;  
 Que le ciel en naissant ne vous eût donné rien ;  
 Que vous n'eussiez ni rang, ni naissance, ni bien ;  
 Afin que de mon cœur l'éclatant sacrifice  
 Vous pût d'un pareil sort réparer l'injustice ;  
 Et que j'eusse la joie et la gloire en ce jour  
 De vous voir tenir tout des mains de mon amour.



of sequel to the *Précieuses Ridicules*, though of a more general application, and the *Malade Imaginaire*. In the latter, he insisted on playing the part of Argan upon the first representation, on the 10th of February 1673 ; but it was the crowning act of his energetic mind. He became ill during the fourth representation of the play, and died that same evening, the 17th of February, exactly one year after Madeleine Béjart, with whom, seven-and-twenty years ago, he had set out from Paris with little more ambition than that of earning a livelihood by the pursuit of a congenial career.

Molière placed upon the stage nearly all human passions which lend themselves to comedy or farce. Sordid avarice, lavish prodigality, shameless vice, womanly resignation, artless coquetry, greed for money, downright hypocrisy, would-be gentility, self-sufficient vanity, fashionable swindling, misanthropy, heartlessness, plain common sense, knowledge of the world, coarse jealousy, irresolution, impudence, pride of birth, egotism, self-conceit, pusillanimity, ingenuity, roguery, affectation, homeliness, thoughtlessness, pedantry, arrogance, and many more faults and vices, find their representatives. The language which they employ is always natural to them, and is neither too gross nor over-refined. His verse has none of the stiffness of the ordinary French rhyme, and becomes in his hands, as well as his prose, a delightful medium for sparkling sallies, bitter sarcasms, and well-sustained and sprightly conversations. And how remarkable and delicate is the *nuance* between his different characters, though they may represent the same profession or an identical personage. None of his doctors are alike ; his male and female scholars are all dissimilar. Mascarille is not Gros-Réné, Scapin is not Sbrigani, Don Juan is not Dorante, Alceste is not Philinte, Isabelle is not Agnes, Sganarelle is not always the same, Ariste is not Béralde nor Chrysalde ; whilst even his servants, Nicole, Dorine, Martine,

Marotte, Toinette, Claudine, and Lisette ; his boobies, such as Alain and Lubin ; and his intriguants in petticoats, such as Nérine, Lucette, Frosine, vary in character, expression, and conduct. They exemplify the saying "Like master, like man." A remarkable characteristic of Molière is<sup>1</sup> that he does not exaggerate ; his fools are never over witty, his buffoons too grotesque, his men of wit too anxious to display their smartness, and his fine gentlemen too fond of immodest and ribald talk. His satire is always kept within bounds, his repartees are never out of place, his plots are but seldom intricate, and the moral of his plays is not obtruded, but follows as a natural consequence of the whole. He rarely rises to those lofty realms of poetry where Shakspeare so often soars, for he wrote not idealistic but character comedies ; which is, perhaps, the reason that some of his would-be admirers consider him rather commonplace. His claim to distinction is based only on strong common sense, good manners, sound morality, real wit, true humour, a great, facile, and accurate command of language, and a photographic delineation of nature. It cannot be denied that there is little action in his plays, but there is a great deal of natural conversation ; his personages show that he was a most attentive observer of men, even at court, where a certain varnish of over-refinement conceals nearly all individual features. He generally makes vice appear in its most ridiculous aspect, in order to let his audience laugh and despise it ; his aim is to correct the follies of the age by exposing them to ridicule. Shakspeare, on the contrary, has no lack of incidents ; he roves through camp, and court, and grove, through solitary forests and populous cities ; he sketches in broad outlines rather than with minute strokes ; he defines classes rather than individuals, and instead of portraying petty vanities

<sup>1</sup> I avail myself of what I have already said on the same subject in the Preface of my translation of the *Dramatic Works* of Molière.



and human foibles, prefers to deal with deep and tumultuous passions, to such an extent that some of his comedies are highly dramatic. But both poets are great, and, perhaps, unsurpassed in their own way.

### § 3. LA FONTAINE.

Amongst the friends of Molière was one who deserves to be mentioned immediately after him, as well on other grounds as because he was a fellow-dramatist, a writer or at least a *collaborateur* of comedies of no mean merit.<sup>1</sup> Jean de La Fontaine<sup>2</sup> is better known as the author of fables and licentious tales in verse than as a worker for the stage; but yet the original bent of his mind seems to me to have been for dramatic literature, and even at an early age he wrote an imitation in verse of the *Eunuch* of Terence. A native of Chateau-Thierry in Champagne, attached to Fouquet by ties of affection and gratitude, he showed the strength of the latter feeling by pleading the cause of the disgraced *surintendant*, writing an elegy on his behalf addressed to the *Nymphs of Vaux*, and an *Ode to the King*, in the year 1663. Next year he published a collection of *Tales*, and seven years later a series of *Nouvelles*, the subjects whereof were taken principally from Boccaccio. It was in 1668, when he was forty-seven years old, that he issued the first collection of his *Fables*, and six more appeared between the years 1671 and 1694; the last and perhaps the weakest, only a year before his death. In the meanwhile he had written three mythological poems—the *loves of Psyché*, *Adonis*, and *Philemon and Baucis* the most natural of the three. Amongst his comedies the judgment

<sup>1</sup> It is said that M. Champmeslé wrote them, and that La Fontaine assisted him.

<sup>2</sup> 1621-1695.

of the later times has declared in favour of the *Enchanted Cup*, which is still, or was until lately, in the repertory of the Théâtre Français.

La Fontaine was a firm friend and a generous appreciator of the talent of others. For no one amongst his contemporaries was his friendship warmer than for Molière; and its fervour was heightened by a deep and lasting admiration of his rival's works. One familiar expression of the poet's has been preserved which speaks more than a dozen pages of eulogy: "Molière is the man for me."<sup>1</sup> The friendship was reciprocated on the part of Molière; and indeed there was much in common, if not in the character, at least in the genius of these two men, which made their friendship both natural and enduring. The luminous simplicity of their art, which seemed with the lightest touch, almost without an effort, to unfold the intricacies of human nature, and to lay bare the secrets of the human heart, was as conspicuous in one as in the other; and it was but slightly that the outer manifestations of their power differed in form and texture. In their personal characters no doubt they were much at variance. La Fontaine was eminently indifferent, Molière was eminently ambitious for his reputation. The one was slipshod in habits; the other was more or less precise in all that he undertook. The first was always poor, or at least improvident, but always contented; the second never rested till he was out of debt, and loved to be surrounded by the elegancies of life. La Fontaine was not devoid of malice, and never made an enemy; Molière had many enemies, but rarely gave personal offence before he was attacked. La Fontaine deserted his wife, neglected his children, was brusque to his friends; Molière's conjugal affection was only too exacting, and his disposition was genuinely benevolent; finally La Fontaine had absolutely no notion of moral or

<sup>1</sup> Molière, c'est mon homme.



social duties, whilst Molière possessed these feelings pre-eminently.

With all his irregularities, all the bluntness and the petulance which must have been occasionally so trying for his friends, La Fontaine was the spoiled child of his age, which could not see or take offence at his sins. He was as improvident as Rutebeuf, as unable to take care of himself as Coleridge; and he ingenuously sponged on one patron or patroness after another. Fouquet we have already mentioned. The Duchess de Bouillon, at whose request he wrote his first tales, and the widowed Duchess of Orleans, were his patronesses. Madame de la Sablière, at whose house he lived for nearly twenty years, was another. It was she who, resigning the pleasures of society, wrote: "I have dismissed all my people, except my dog, my cat, and La Fontaine." She had influence enough to secure his election to the Academy, even when Boileau was a candidate; but our poet had to buy himself in at the price of a few fulsome and flattering odes to the king. When Madame de la Sablière died, Hervant, an old friend, hurried to offer him an asylum. He met La Fontaine weeping in the street, and bade him return with him. "I was on my way to come to you," said the poet. When La Fontaine himself passed away—which he did filled with repentance induced by sickness and old age—his nurse said, "Dieu n'aura jamais le courage de le damner," and Bishop Fénelon, on hearing of his death, wrote a Latin theme, which he gave to translate to his pupil, the youthful Duke of Burgundy, grandson of Louis XIV., and in which he said almost the same thing in another form. "Read him," he says in a fervid eulogy, "and say if Anacreon could jest more gracefully; if Horace has dressed his philosophy in more poetic and attractive adornments; if Terence has painted the manners of men with greater naturalness and truth." Le Brun wrote his epitaph in a spirit which is undoubtedly in

harmony with the feelings of the bulk of his fellow-countrymen.<sup>1</sup>

In his character he was an exaggeration of the *esprit gaulois*. Taking nothing for serious, not even passion, but looking for enjoyment and amusement everywhere, considering love as a good thing to wile away an idle hour, but not as an intoxication ; being the more attracted in plucking a fruit, because it is forbidden, and looking upon life in preference as a laughing matter, that part of the *esprit gaulois* La Fontaine has delineated in his *Tales*. In his *Fables* he shows another, and if not a better, at least a very superior literary man. He is there the worthy rival of Molière in delicacy and accurate power of observation, in dramatic force, simplicity of style, and influence on his readers. In all his works he is a true poet, often apt to forget himself, and even sometimes his dignity, only caring for the subject that occupies his thoughts for the time—now being filled with Plato, another time with the prophet Baruch, again with Malherbe and Racan, of whom he speaks more than once with hyperbolic praise, placing them “amongst the angels, chaunting on high the praise of the Eternal,”<sup>2</sup> and to whom he refers as “rivals of Horace, heirs of his lyre, disciples of Apollo, or rather our masters.”<sup>3</sup> In the *Fables* he attempts to depict the whole of human life. They form the true epic French poem, and France has no other. La Fontaine is the French Homer, for he is as universal, idealistic, and natural as the Greek.<sup>4</sup> He is easy to understand, for he does not fatigue, and skims

<sup>1</sup> “Qu'un petit docteur au front chauve  
Dise que les jeux sont maudits ;  
Je n'en crois rien : si l'esprit sauve  
La Fontaine est en Paradis.”

<sup>2</sup> A letter to Huet. See bk. iv., ch. 3, p. 65, note 1. <sup>3</sup> *Fables*, bk. iii. 1.

<sup>4</sup> See H. A. Taine, *La Fontaine et ses fables*, 1861, p. 49 *et passim*. I am happy to acknowledge here my obligations to this literary critic, whom I have partly followed in his reasonings and deductions in my study of our author.



everything, even sentiments. Sometimes he is serious, sometimes ironical, sometimes innocent, or philosophical, but he is always making fun of some one or of something. As a moralist he is neither severe nor indignant, but teaches that man should not be a fool, should learn to know life, and become neither the dupe of others nor of himself. He depicts the world as it is, says that to "suffer is better than to die," that "our master is our enemy," and utters a great many similar maxims. He praises even political treachery. "The wise man says, according to the people whom he has to deal with: 'Long live the King! long live the League!'"<sup>1</sup> He glorifies four times in prose and in verse the revocation of the edict of Nantes, for "Louis has banished from France the heretical and very foolish brood;" and because the Pope does not admire this revocation, La Fontaine tells him that he is "neither holy nor Father, and that our triumph over error only causes his anger against the eldest of his children to increase."<sup>2</sup> When Vendôme feels some scruples about the laying waste of the Palatinate, our poet asks, "Should we have gentler guests if the Germans came to us?"<sup>3</sup> As a writer, his only creed appears to be "Let us live and be merry," and this he preaches with a persistency worthy of a better cause, and in a style so natural and easy, that he was and is still more popular with the French than any other writer.

And does not La Fontaine describe his animals well and caustically? They are men or women disguised as animals, but still having the characteristics of both. The

<sup>1</sup> M. Taine observes on this, "This is the morality of the poor, the oppressed, in one word of the *subject*. We have no longer the word, but we have still the thing. . . . This state of things has hardly changed, and the maxims which spring from it have not changed either. Except a select few, the French have stopped at La Fontaine's morality."

<sup>2</sup> The king of France was called "the eldest son of the Church."

<sup>3</sup> Paul Albert, *La littérature française au dix-septième siècle*, p. 223.



king lion, for example, is like another Louis XIV.: he is never loud, "cries are unbecoming to the sovereign majesty;"<sup>1</sup> he is kindly disposed, "when he has well dined;" he may get "bored,"<sup>2</sup> but "he does not want chatter-boxes at court."<sup>3</sup> He holds "open court," and behaves right royally, and does not even deign to apply "his sacred nails" upon a wretched animal who has offended the queen, but leaves him to the vengeance of the inferior beings, the wolves."<sup>4</sup> When misfortunes overwhelm the State the lion proposes that they should sacrifice the most guilty animal, and confesses that he has eaten "many sheep, and even sometimes the shepherd;" the fox declares that the king has "done them too much honour," and of course the harmless donkey, who had only nibbled a few blades of grass, is declared the most culpable and slain on the spot. But our monarch has his moments of noble feeling, and when the rat by accident comes between the paws of the lion, he gives him his life. Finally, when the king of animals, broken down by age, sad and gloomy, and being hardly able to roar, awaits his destiny without complaining,<sup>5</sup> it reminds us of Saint Simon forgetting all the evil done by Louis XIV. on beholding the calmness of the aged monarch assailed by misfortunes.

After the king come the courtiers, and the fox appears to be the most accomplished of them. When the lion is ill, and the fox is unfortunately absent, "the wolf attacks his friend behind his back, at the king's couchee."<sup>6</sup> But when the next

<sup>1</sup> "Les cris sont indécents à la majesté souveraine."

<sup>2</sup> "Le maître des dieux assez, souvent s'ennuie."

<sup>3</sup> "Je n'ai que faire d'une babillarde à ma cour."

<sup>4</sup> "Nous n'appliquerons pas . . . nos sacrés onglés. Venez, loups, vengez la reine."

<sup>5</sup> "Le malheureux lion, languissant, triste et morne,  
Peut à peine rugir, par l'âge estropié,  
Il attend son destin sans faire aucunes plaintes."

*Fables*, bk. iii. 14.

<sup>6</sup> "Le loup . . . daube au coucher du roi son camarade absent."—*Ibid.* bk. viii. 3.

morning Reynard makes his appearance, he quietly declares that he had gone on a pilgrimage to pray for the king's health, and that he has brought with him a consultation of some "learned and skilled" doctors, who advise that "the skin of a wolf flayed alive, should be applied whilst quite warm and smoking," and then turning politely to his fellow-courtier he says, "Master Wolf will serve you, if you please, as a dressing gown."<sup>1</sup> Needless to say that the proposed remedy was tried. And so he sneaks through life, like a true courtier, never at a loss for an excuse, nor for an expedient, proud with his superiors and cringing with his inferiors.

Other noblemen appear: the heavy elephant, the rustic bear, the lordly and haughty dog who considers the collar round his neck as "a trifle," the long-legged skinny and proud heron; and all these animals behave as insolently as the real noblemen of Louis XIV.'s court. We must also not forget the *curé* Jean Chouart, who goes "gaily behind a body" at a funeral, and counts on the money which he shall receive for his prayers to buy a "cask of the best wine;" the hermit, a rat who having taken refuge in a Dutch cheese, answers the deputies of his nation who begged for some assistance because their capital, Ratapolis, was besieged: "The things here below do not concern me any longer; in what can a poor recluse be of any assistance to you? What else can he do but pray heaven that it may aid you in this?"<sup>2</sup> And the devout cat, who, caught in a net when he was going to say his prayers, is freed by a rat, who gnaws through one of the meshes, which

<sup>1</sup> "D'un loup écorché vif appliquez-vous la peau  
Toute chaude et toute fumante. . .  
Messire loup vous servira,  
S'il vous plaît, de robe de chambre."—*Fables*, bk. viii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> "Les choses d'ici-bas ne me regardent plus,  
En quoi peut un pauvre reclus  
Vous assister? Que peut-il faire  
Que de prier le ciel qu'il vous aide en ceci." . .  
*Ibid.*, bk. vii. 3.

so rejoices pious pussy that he wishes to embrace his deliverer, exclaiming, "Do you think I have forgotten that after God I owe you my life?"<sup>1</sup>

Now we have arrived at the citizens, and La Fontaine, who seems like one of them when he jeers at the nobles, seems a noble when he makes fun of the citizens. Here is the burgomaster: "Master rat, who had boasted a hundred times that he feared neither male nor female cat . . . wishing to assist a mouse, hastens, and arrives" quite out of breath "to consult the other rats. They, pot-valiant, call to arms ;" in vain their spouses shed tears, each puts a piece of cheese in his bag,<sup>2</sup> and valiantly marches to meet the cat, who appears holding the mouse, and spitting. Immediately all the rats retire and "beat a happy retreat." So, when Master Cormorant, old and decrepit, can no longer go and catch fish, he tells his gossip, the crayfish, to inform the fishes that the master will come and net the pond within eight days, and that they will all be caught then. "Great is the hubbub, the people run, meet, send deputations to the bird." "My Lord Cormorant, whence have you this piece of news? Who told it you? Are you sure of it? Can you advise us? and what is the best thing to do?"<sup>3</sup> He carefully helps them all out of the pond, puts them by for a rainy day, and gobbles them

<sup>1</sup> "Penses-tu que j'aie oublié  
Qu'après Dieu je te dois la vie?"

*Fables*, bk. viii. 22.

<sup>2</sup> "Il arrive . . . les poumons essoufflés. . .  
Chacun dit. . . Sus! sus! courons aux armes!  
Quelques rates, dit on, répandirent des larmes. . .  
Chacun met dans son sac un morceau de fromage."

*Ibid.* bk. xii. 26.

<sup>3</sup> "Grande est l'émeute.  
On court, on s'assemble, on députe  
A l'oiseau: 'Seigneur Cormoran,  
D'où vous-vient cet avis? Quel est votre garant?  
Etes-vous sûr de cette affaire?  
N'y savez-vous remède? et qu'est-il bon de faire?'"

*Ibid.* bk. x. 14.



up at his leisure. If these good burghers do not deserve pity they deserve ridicule, because they imagine that "the whole world turned upon the interests of four wretched marshes."<sup>1</sup> When Jupiter sends them a good king they become insolent, and so they get a crane, who eats them. These citizens have already the notion of equality; the rat is as good as an elephant, until the cat shows him the contrary;<sup>2</sup> the mule is always boasting of his mother the mare;<sup>3</sup> the ass prides himself on his excellence in speaking and singing;<sup>4</sup> another donkey wishes to imitate a little dog, a gentleman;<sup>5</sup> a rat accepts a sudden invitation of a frog, and only wishes to eat a good dinner.<sup>6</sup> A great many more citizen-vices are depicted; for example the ant, careful, economical, discreet, who on being applied to for a loan by a poet, the cricket, replies by asking what the improvident animal has done during the summer, and on hearing that it has been singing, answers, "You were singing! I am very glad to hear that; well, you may dance now!"<sup>7</sup>

And thus La Fontaine goes on, having his fling at the lawyers, the doctors, the teachers, and the shopkeepers, always using the appropriate technical phrases, and never missing to put "the right word in the right place." Then he sketches the tillers of the soil, not as fancy painted them, but as they really are, or rather were in the glorious reign of Louis

<sup>1</sup> "À les ouïr, tout le monde. . .

Roulait sur les intérêts

De quatre méchants marais."—*Fables*, bk. xii. 24.

<sup>2</sup> "Le chat . . .

Lui fit voir en moins d'un instant

Qu'un rat n'est pas un éléphant."—*Ibid.* bk. viii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> "Le mulet . . . ne parlait incessamment

Que de sa mère la jument."—*Ibid.* bk. vi. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* bk. xi. 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* bk. iv. 4.

<sup>6</sup> "Une grenouille approche et lui dit en sa langue

'Venez-me voir chez moi, je vous ferai festin.'

Messire rat promet soudain."—*Ibid.* bk. iv. 11.

<sup>7</sup> "Vous chantez, j'en suis fort aise;

Eh bien! dansez maintenant."—*Ibid.* bk. i. 1.



XIV., beasts of burden, mere animals, only caring for coarse food and strong drink, repulsive and grotesque at the same time ; and the artisan, hard working but not over-respectful, and sometimes "having no bread, and never any rest, and calling upon death to release him."<sup>1</sup>

As for the animals, he really studied them and loved them, perhaps better than he did his fellow-men. I am not quite sure if he were not the only man of his age who understood them, and who had a profound and true admiration for trees, flowers, brooks, landscapes, anything and everything that belonged to nature. His description of animals always corresponds with their exterior. His lion is the true king of beasts ; his frown is terrible, his mane is imposing, and his glare kingly. Does not the fox look like a courtier, with his sharp-pointed nose, his sparkling and intelligent eyes, his nimble gait, his depredatory and cunning habits, his rich skin, and his splendid tail ? Has the cat not the appearance of a hypocrite, with his careful feline walk, his half-closed eyes, his humble countenance, his velvety skin, his flattering, purring begging, his momentary repose, his continual self-consciousness, and his art of taking the chestnuts out of the fire without burning his paws ? The bear is the well-to-do country gentleman, with a good deal of the clodhopper in him, with magnificent teeth, big paws, and straightforward gait, showing by his liking for dainties his gentlemanly descent, and by his sombre mien and his dull skin his misanthropy and provincial sourness. The monkey is no bad representative of the travelling quack, with his continual chattering and moving about, and with his inclination for roguery. The owl is a philosopher, always sad and thoughtful, always in opposition, grumbling, and no respecter of persons, hating his fellow-creatures, and though very ugly, thinking his children "beautiful, well-made,

<sup>1</sup> "Point de pain quelquefois, et jamais de repos. . .  
Il appelle la mort."—*Fables*, bk. i. 16.

and pretty above all their companions.”<sup>1</sup> The cock looks an animal without mercy, with the chest of a warrior and the strut of a Bobadil, a fickle lover and a bad father, who treats his wives as a sultan and master, defending them out of pride and not out of affection. And so we might go on to prove that our author knew animals, their habits and customs, their likes and dislikes; and give his portrait of the dove, the sheep, the wolf, the ass, whom he calls “a good creature,” if stubborn and obstinate; but our list is already too long. He speaks of the gods as a real pagan, has the Olympus at his fingers’ ends, and makes the heathen divinities the relatives, and not seldom the companions of the brute creation.

We have already spoken of La Fontaine’s style in eulogistic terms—and no praise can be more deservedly bestowed, for he is perhaps the most finished of French poets. His tripping vivacity of metre makes him never wearisome, and his poetry never monotonous—as French poetry very often is. His pictures are perfection, his dialogue is animated, his personages are natural, and never say too much or too little; the action of his fables never flags. Was I not therefore justified in calling La Fontaine one of the first-rate dramatists of his age? Let us give one of his fables, *The Monkey and the Leopard*, as a specimen of his talent; but let those who read it not forget that we cannot render the charm of his diction, which may however be studied in the original:—

“ The monkey and the leopard  
 Earned money at the fair;  
 Each spouted on his own account;  
 The one said: ‘Gentlemen, my merits and fame  
 Are known in high places; the king desired to see me,

<sup>1</sup> “ Mes petits sont mignons,  
 Beaux, bien faits et jolis sur tous leurs compagnons.”

*Fables*, bk. v. 18.

And, if I die, he means to have  
 A muff made of my skin, it is so variegated,  
 Full of spots, chequered,  
 And striped, and speckled ;  
 Variety has charms.' Of course, every one went to see him.  
 But it was soon over, and presently every one went out.  
 Then the monkey said : ' Come, I pray you,  
 Come, gentlemen, I perform a hundred tricks,  
 This diversity of which you have heard so much,  
 My neighbour leopard has it outwardly ;  
 But I have it in my mind. Your servant Gille,  
 Cousin and son-in-law of Bertrand,  
 The Pope's monkey whilst he was alive,  
 Is just now in this town  
 Arrived in three boats, on purpose to have speech with you.  
 For he speaks, as you shall hear ; he can dance and bow,  
 Do all sorts of tricks,  
 Jump through hoops ; and all for six farthings,  
 Nay, gentlemen, for one sou. If you are not satisfied,  
 We will give every man his money back at the door.'  
 The monkey was right, it is not diversity in dress  
 Which pleases me, but in the mind,  
 The one is always providing pleasant things,  
 The other, in less than an instant, wearies the lookers-on.  
 Oh, how many great lords, like the leopard,  
 Have no other talent than their dress."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> " Le singe avec le léopard  
 Gagnaient de l'argent à la foire.  
 Ils affichaient chacun à part.  
 L'un d'eux disait : ' Messieurs, mon mérite et ma gloire  
 Sont connus en bon lieu : le roi m'a voulu voir ;  
 Et, si je meurs, il veut avoir  
 Un manchon de ma peau ; tant elle est bigarrée,  
 Pleine de taches, marquetée,  
 Et vergetée, et mouchetée.'  
 La bigarrure plaît : partant chacun le vit.  
 Mais ce fut bientôt fait, bientôt chacun sortit.  
 Le singe de sa part disait : ' Venez, de grâce,  
 Venez, messieurs : je fais cent tours de passe-passe.



## § 4. MINOR DRAMATISTS.

Amongst the plays more or less frequently acted in Paris at the time when Molière's literary career began, were those of Paul Scarron<sup>1</sup> and Georges de Scudéry. The former, ill-shaped in body and fantastic in mind, a buffoon by nature and choice, burlesqued all that he put his hands to, avoiding grave subjects and modes of treatment with an unfeigned repugnance. He turned the *Æneid* into a travesty, produced the *Typhon*, a burlesque poem, and wrote in prose perhaps the most notable of his works from a literary point of view, the *Roman Comique*, describing to the life and without exaggeration the adventures of a company of strolling players, in a style of which some early Spanish novelists furnished the best examples. He was the inaugurator of French burlesque—a name invented by his friend Sarasin<sup>2</sup> instead of the less specific *grotesque*—or rather let us say that

Cette diversité dont on vous parle tant  
 Mon voisin léopard l'a sur soi seulement ;  
 Moi je l'ai dans l'esprit : votre serviteur Gille,  
 Cousin et gendre de Bertrand  
 Singe du pape en son vivant,  
 Tout fraîchement en cette ville  
 Arrive en trois bateaux, exprès pour vous parler.  
 Car il parle, on l'entend ; il sait danser, baller,  
 Faire des tours de toute sorte,  
 Passer en des cerceaux ; et le tout pour six blancs ;  
 Non, messieurs, pour un sou : si vous n'êtes contents,  
 Nous rendrons à chacun son argent à la porte.  
 Le singe avait raison : ce n'est pas sur l'habit  
 Que la diversité me plaît, c'est dans l'esprit :  
 L'une fournit toujours des choses agréables ;  
 L'autre, en moins d'un moment, lasse les regardants.  
 O que de grands seigneurs, au léopard semblables,  
 N'ont que l'habit pour tous talents !"

<sup>1</sup> 1610-1660.<sup>2</sup> 1605-1654.



Scarron was the first Frenchman who expanded the *esprit narquois* from an interjection or a phrase into the dimensions of a narrative or a chapter of gossip. The satire of the age was not good-natured: witness above all the pages of Talemant des Réaux, the prying and quizzing biographer of his contemporaries. Good-humour did not thrive in the days of the Fronde; and Scarron writes the language of disgust and discontent, revolting against sorrow and disgrace with the fixed determination to force himself and all his hearers into a loud and long guffaw. Well-born, with money at command, taking holy orders rather out of caprice than with any manifest desire to devote himself to piety, he began life with every prospect of a happy and bright career. He travelled to Rome, and does not seem to have displayed much of the twist of genius which was afterwards conspicuous in him. When still young he became a helpless cripple; and this under such lamentable circumstances that his health quitted his mind at the same time with his body. A story was invented to account for his misfortune, which is not in itself very creditable. It was said that, at the carnival, he and some of his friends made themselves up as savages, in savages' costume; and that their presence in the crowd being somewhat roughly resented, they took to flight and swam across the river, which in Scarron's case brought on an attack of paralysis. Another story is that which makes Scarron a notable example of the mischief wrought by quack-doctors in their treatment of specific cases, the consequence of which was that he kept his room for five-and-twenty years, scarcely ever able to leave his chair. He thus describes himself in one of his letters:—

“I have lived to thirty; if I live to forty I shall only add many miseries to those which I have endured these last eight or nine years. My person was well made, though short; my disorder has shortened it still more by a foot. My head is a little broad for my shape; my face is full enough for my

body to appear very meagre ; I have hair enough to render a wig unnecessary ; I have got many white hairs. . . . My teeth, formerly square pearls, are now of the colour of wood, and will soon be of slate. My legs and thighs first formed an obtuse angle, afterwards a right angle, and at length an acute one. My thighs and body form another ; and my head, always dropping on my breast, makes me not ill represent a Z. I have my arms shortened as well as my legs, and my fingers as well as my arms. In a word, I am an abridgment of human miseries." Writing to Sarasin he describes himself as

" A poor fellow,  
Very thin,  
With a wry neck,  
Whose body  
Quite twisted,  
Quite humpbacked,  
Aged,  
Fleshless,  
Is reduced  
Day and night  
To suffer,  
Without being cured,  
Some vehement  
Torments." <sup>1</sup>

That was what he made a joke of ; that, and the loss of his pension, and his being brought to death's door by a cough, and his poverty, and the world's treatment of himself, and the world's treatment of the world, and Mazarin, and what not.

<sup>1</sup> " Un pauvre  
Très-maigre,  
Au col tors  
Dont le corps  
Tout tortu,  
Tout bossu,  
Suranné

Décharné  
Est réduit,  
Jour et nuit,  
À souffrir  
Sans guérir  
Des tourments  
Véhéments."

When without any means, he petitioned the queen for the honour of being called her "sick-man by right of office." The following verses form part of the address :—

"Scarron, by the grace of God,  
Unworthy sick-man of the queen,  
A man without a house or home,  
But with plenty of evils and troubles ;  
A hospital moving up and down,  
Walking with other people's legs,  
Having no more any use for his own,  
Suffering much, and sleeping very little,  
And, however, very courageously  
Showing a good countenance, though playing a losing  
game.<sup>1</sup>

He got his title and a small pension, which he lost by attacking Mazarin. Poor and crippled as he was, his wit made way with the world. His small rooms attracted many of the best men in Paris. Georges de Scudéry, Sarasin, Boisrobert, Marigny, Chapelain, Voiture ; and amongst the ladies, Mademoiselle de Scudéry, Madame de la Sablière, Marion de Lorme, Ninon de l'Enclos, and, last not least, Françoise d'Aubigné, a grand-daughter of the friend of Henry IV., a ward of Scarron's neighbour the Baroness de Neuillant, who, afraid of being sent to a convent, and taking pity on the great soul cribbed in the wreck of a body, married him. When the notary asked him what dowery she brought, Scarron replied : "Two great mutinous eyes, a handsome bust, a pair of lovely

<sup>1</sup> "Scarron, par la grace de Dieu,  
Malade indigne de la reine,  
Homme n'ayant ni feu ni lieu,  
Mais bien du mal et de la peine ;  
Hôpital allant et venant,  
Des jambes d'autrui cheminant,  
Des siennes n'ayant plus l'usage,  
Souffrant beaucoup, dormant bien peu,  
Et pourtant faisant par courage  
Bonne mine et fort mauvais jeu."



hands, and plenty of wit;" asked as to his own settlement, he answered laconically, "Immortality." He was right; but another vied with Scarron in giving immortality to Françoise d'Aubigné, who is better known to fame as Madame de Maintenon, the wife of Louis XIV.

Scarron wrote several comedies in verse; one, *l'Héritier ridicule* (1649), which it is said Louis XIV. desired to see acted twice in one day; and several about *Jodelet* and his adventures. *Don Japhet d'Arménie* is considered his best play, but it is very coarse and licentious. In his *Écolier de Salamanque*, Crispin appears for the first time on the stage. His epitaph, which is written by himself, is as follows:—

"He who sleeps here now,  
Caused more pity than envy,  
And suffered a thousand deaths  
Before losing his life.  
Passer-by, do not make any noise here,  
And take care not to awake him,  
For this is the first night  
That poor Scarron slumbers."<sup>1</sup>

Georges de Scudéry,<sup>2</sup> the brother of Mademoiselle de Scudéry of whom we have already spoken, determined, after an excellent education, and after having followed the profession of arms, to devote himself to poetry and the drama. He edited the poems of Théophile de Viau (1632), wrote *The Tomb of Théophile*, and showed already in the preface his vanity and self-conceit. "If there exists some hare-brained fellow," so he says, "who thinks that I have offended his imaginary glory, in order to show him that I fear him as much as I esteem him, I wish him to know that I am called

<sup>1</sup> "Celuy qui cy mainte ant dort  
Fit plus de pitié que d'envie,  
Et souffrit mille fois la mort  
Avant que de perdre la vie.

Passant, ne fais icy de bruit,  
Et garde bien qu'il ne s'éveille,  
Car voicy la première nuit  
Que le pauvre Scarron sommeille."

<sup>2</sup> 1601-1667.



de Scudéry." This tone never left him. His first play, *Lygdamon and Lydias*, represented in 1629, was printed in 1631, and dedicated to the young Duke de Montmorency, with a preface, in which he states : "These verses which I offer you are, if not well made, at least composed with little trouble. . . . I have passed more years in arms than in my study, and have used more matches for my gun than candles, so that I know better to arrange soldiers than words, and better to form battalions than phrases." This play received, however, the warm praises of friends like Corneille, Hardy, Scarron, and Rotrou. In the last-named year he put upon the stage *The Deceiver Punished*, a tragedy in verse, which was followed in succession by fourteen others. But perhaps the best of all his plays is his *Comedy of the Comedians*, first performed in 1634. In the prologue to this piece, which, as well as the first two acts, is written in prose, we are given to understand that the scene is laid in Lyons, and that the harlequin of the company has been round the town, accompanied by a drummer, to announce the *Comédiens du Roy*, whereof the very middling members have given themselves each brave names, such as Belle-Ombre, Belle-Fleur, Belle-Epine, and Beau-Séjour. No one, however, will believe in the ability of the troupe to entertain their audience. The harlequin returns, and is obliged to confess to the company that he has had no success ; and in fact the room is supposed to be absolutely empty. At length a spectator arrives, in the person of M. de Blandimare, who, it turns out, is industriously looking for a runaway nephew. The said nephew is no other than Belle-Ombre, the doorkeeper of the establishment. He does not recognise his uncle, but directs his attention to a bill of the play. We may quote a few passages from this comedy, which will fairly illustrate the style of the author :—

*M. de Blandimare (reading the bill).* The Comedians of the King. . . . Oh ! we know that without being told. This posi-

tion, and that of gentleman of the bedchamber in ordinary, are cheap just now. True, the wages are not high. What is the fee for entering?

*Belle-Ombre.* Eight sous.

M. de Blandimare takes pity on the company, and invites them to supper. The second act of the piece discovers them at table.

*M. de Blandimare.* Let us have some finger-glasses; we have done eating. There, give me your hand, Mademoiselle de Beau. . . .

*Mad. de Beau-Soleil.* De Beau-Soleil, at your service, sir.

*M. de Blandimare.* The fault of my memory is much to be excused, for all the tribes of comedians have so much resemblance in names that it is very difficult to avoid confounding them. M. de Bellerose, de Belleville, Beller Roche, Beauchâteau, Beaulieu, Beaupré, Bellefleur, Belle-Epine, Beau-Soleil, Belle-Ombre; in fact they comprise in themselves all the beauties of nature.

The host presently entreats his guests to give him some specimens of their repertory:—

*M. de Blandimare.* What pieces have you?

*M. de Beau-Soleil.* All those of the late Hardy. . . . Théophile's *Pyrame*, the *Sylvie*, *Chryséide*, *Sylvanire*, the *Folies de Cardenio*, the *Infidèle Confidente*, *Philis de Scyre*, the *Bergeries* of M. de Racan, *Lygdamon*, the *Trompeur Puni*, *Mélite*, *Clitandre*, *la Veuve*, *la Bague de l'Oubly*, and all that the best wits of the age have produced. But for the present it will be enough if we let you hear a pastoral eclogue by the author of the *Trompeur Puni*.

*M. de Blandimare.* You have made no bad selection by way of pleasing me, for the gentleman of whom you speak is, in my mind, one of those who carry a sword which is of great assistance to the pen.

The eclogue is duly given and admired; so much so that M. de Blandimare declares that he will never leave the com-

pany, and demands to see a whole play ; whereupon follows a tragi-comedy in three acts, and in verse.

Scudéry was never averse to self-praise; he liked to think of himself as the fashionable dramatist of the period; and he was always on the best terms with Richelieu and the representatives of authority in general; we may add, with the Academy in particular. It was Scudéry, be it remembered, who was most active in securing the decision of the new court of literature against the *Cid*, and he was on constant terms of rivalry with Corneille. We do not find that the latter troubled himself greatly to prove or assert his superiority; whilst of Scudéry the best thing that we can say of him in this connection is that his ambition to excel the author of the *Cid* led to the production of his two most respectable tragedies, *Ibrahim or the illustrious Bashaw*, and *Arminius*. Let it however be stated to his honour that after he had dedicated his epic poem *Alaric* to Christina of Sweden, and when that Queen had offered him a heavy chain of gold if he would expunge some lines written in honour of one of her former favourites, the Count de la Gardie, he magnanimously replied: "If that golden chain were as weighty as the one mentioned in the history of the Incas, I will never destroy an altar on which I have sacrificed."

Amongst the minor dramatists of the age of Louis XIV. Edme Boursault<sup>1</sup> deserves a prominent place. He was, as we have already mentioned, but a young man when he undertook to ridicule Molière for the company of the hôtel de Bourgogne, and he lived to do better things. At all events he offered Boileau voluntarily a considerable sum of money when the latter was in distress, and thus gained the affection of a man who had begun by avenging Molière upon his over-ambitious rival. His comedy *le Mercure galant* contains more than one genuinely ludicrous situation; whilst his two

<sup>1</sup> 1638-1701.

comedies *Esopé d la Cour* and *Esopé d la Ville* met with great success. Of the first, which was played after his death, Montesquieu bears a very flattering testimony. "I remember," he says, "after seeing a piece called *Esop at Court*, I was so penetrated by the desire of being a better man, that I do not know if I ever made a stronger resolution."

Regnard,<sup>1</sup> author of the *Joueur*, the *Légataire*, and the *Ménechmes*, has earned a higher reputation than Boursault. Boileau says of him little more than that he is in no small degree funny ; and perhaps no one would be likely to derive from his comedies any greater benefit than arises from a hearty, self-forgetting laugh. He occupies, after Molière's death, much the same position which Scarron occupied before Molière had risen to fame ; excelling the pungent cripple in farcical humour, whilst he falls short of him in wit. But with the death of Molière high comedy in France was destined to slumber for many years before any new creator should arise to give us so much as the basis of comparison with the master-hand.

<sup>1</sup> 1665-1709.



## CHAPTER II.

## § 1. THE MORALISTS.

THE written eloquence of the seventeenth century, and of the age of Louis XIV. in particular, is hardly less brilliant than the beauty of its poetical productions. The influence of the style of Calvin and his school had gradually and surely made itself felt, even upon those who were far from sympathising in the opinions of the lawgiver of the Reformation, and in spite of the careful seclusion of the works of Protestant writers from all the public libraries. The prose of the Augustan age of French literature, setting aside mere translations from the ancients, which indeed were not many, inasmuch as the classical Renaissance had cleared off most of what there was to be done in this respect, was employed in four principal literary *genres*: philosophy, as exemplified by Descartes, morality, as diversely exemplified by Pascal and La Rochefoucauld, memoirs, and correspondence. In the last of these *genres* the talent of Guez de Balzac<sup>1</sup> is supreme; although we have already seen that more than one woman excelled in this peculiar literary style, and deserved that their familiar and every-day letters to their friends should be handed down as models for posterity.<sup>2</sup>

Jean-Louis Guez, Seigneur de Balzac, was born at Angoulême, and was a central figure of society in the first half of the seventeenth century. He was one of the

<sup>1</sup> 1597-1655.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, Madame de Sévigné.

original members of the Academy, though he does not seem to have been sedulous in attending its sittings, and he certainly maintained throughout his life an independence of thought and expression by no means characteristic of the majority of his colleagues. Chapelain was amongst the most frequent of his correspondents, and through him Balzac always communicated with the society of the hôtel de Rambouillet, which however he did not attend in person. He expresses a warm admiration for the hostess of that celebrated *coterie*; but the retirement in which he preferred to live was so greatly cherished by him, that he seldom interrupted it even by a visit to the capital. Years before he had seen Madame de Rambouillet<sup>1</sup> he dedicated to her more than one of his books, such as *Le Romain* and *La Vertu Romaine*, in which he pays many delicate compliments to the object of his gallant admiration. Balzac's was already an influential name amongst his fellow-countrymen, and the relations subsisting between him and Madame de Rambouillet remind us of the diplomatic courtesies of a couple of powerful monarchs. In 1640 he sent to her—always through his correspondent Chapelain—an early copy of his *Discours de l'Eloquence*; and the admiration excited by it was no greater than it deserves.

The style of Guez de Balzac, which may be favourably studied in many of his *Letters*, as well as in the best of his essays, such as those on *The Prince*, *Aristippus*, or *the Court*, and the *Christian Socrates*, is perhaps the finest example of French prose to be met with in the first half of the seventeenth century: better than that of Descartes, better even than that of La Rochefoucauld. It is the prose of a scholar, of a grammarian by instinct, of a rhetorician by talent and culture. Well balanced, well moulded and polished, it shines and attracts in comparison with the writings of the most

<sup>1</sup> M. C. Livet, *Précieux et Précieuses*, p. 12, shows that Balzac had certainly not seen Madame de Rambouillet in 1638.

elegant literary men in an age of literary elegance. True, Balzac is occasionally strained in thought, and extravagant in the use of figures ; but he is always fresh and vigorous. We will quote as a sample a letter which he wrote to Corneille in acknowledgment of the latter's *Cinna*—a letter of which Voltaire said that foreigners might see from it what eloquence was in the age which produced it.

“ I have felt a wonderful relief since the arrival of your parcel, and I proclaim a miracle from the commencement of my letter. Your *Cinna* cures the sick ; it makes the paralytic clap their hands ; it restores speech to the dumb ; it were too little to say to those who have a cold. As a matter of fact, I had lost my speech and my voice, and since I have recovered both by your aid, it is very right that I should employ them both to your glory, and say, without ceasing : ‘ What a beautiful thing ! ’ Nevertheless, you are afraid of being one of those who are oppressed by the majesty of the subjects which they treat, and you do not conceive that you have brought sufficient force to bear to sustain the Roman grandeur. Though this modesty charms me it does not persuade me, and I object to it in the interest of truth. . . . You make me see Rome, as much as it is possible in Paris, and you have not broken it in removing it. It is not a Rome of Cassiodorus, nor as distracted as it was in the ages of the Theodorics ; it is a Rome of Livy, and as pompous as it was in the time of the first Cæsars. . . . The wife of Horatius and the mistress of Cinna, which are your two genuine productions, and the two pure creations of your mind, are they not also the chief ornaments of your two poems ? And what has sacred antiquity produced of vigorous and firm in the weaker sex which can compare with these new heroines which you have introduced to the world, these Roman women of your creation ? I have not wearied of considering, during a fortnight, the one which I received last. I have elicited admiration for it from all the most accomplished men of our province : our authors and poets say wonders of it, but a doctor, who is a neighbour of mine, who generally uses a lofty style, certainly speaks of it in a strange way ; and there can be no harm in your knowing how far you have affected



his mind. On the first day he contented himself with saying that your Emilia was the rival of Cato and Brutus in the passion for liberty. Now he goes much farther: at one time he declared her possessed with the demon of the Republic, and at another he calls her the lovely, the rational, the holy, the adorable fury. These are strange words on the subject of your Roman lady; but they are not without foundation. She does in fact inspire the whole conspiracy, and gives ardour to the party by the fire which she breathes into the breast of the leader; she undertakes, in her vengeance, to avenge the whole earth; she would sacrifice to her father a victim too great for Jove himself. She is, in my opinion, so excellent a character, that I think it is saying little to her credit to say that you are far happier in your race than Pompey was in his, and that your child Emilia is worth beyond comparison more than her grandson Cinna. If the latter has even greater worth than Seneca supposed, it is inasmuch as he has fallen into your hands, and because you have taken charge of him. He is indebted to you for his merit, as to Augustus for his dignity; the Emperor made him a consul, and you have made him a gentleman."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "J'ai senti un notable soulagement depuis l'arrivée de votre paquet, et je crie miracle dès le commencement de ma lettre. Votre *Cinna* guérit les malades; il fait que les paralytiques battent les mains, il rend la parole à un muet, ce seroit trop peu de dire à un enrhumé. En effet, j'avois perdu la parole avec la voix; et, puisque je les recouvre l'une et l'autre par votre moyen, il est bien juste que je les emploie toutes deux à votre gloire, et à dire sans cesse: 'La belle chose.' Vous avez peur néanmoins d'être de ceux qui sont accablés par la majesté des sujets qu'ils traitent, et ne pensez pas avoir apporté assez de force pour soutenir la grandeur romaine. Quoique cette modestie me plaise, elle ne me persuade pas, et je m'y oppose pour l'intérêt de la vérité. . . . Vous nous faites voir Rome tout ce qu'elle peut être à Paris, et ne l'avez point brisée en la remuant. Ce n'est point une Rome de Cassiodore, et aussi déchirée qu'elle l'étoit au siècle des Théodoric; c'est une Rome de Tite-Live, et aussi pompeuse qu'elle étoit au temps de premiers Césars. . . La femme d'Horace et la maîtresse de Cinna, qui sont vos deux véritables enfantements et les deux pures créatures de votre esprit, ne sont-elles pas aussi les principaux ornements de vos deux poèmes? Et qu'est-ce que la sainte antiquité a produit de vigoureux et de ferme dans le sexe foible, qui soit comparable à ces nouvelles héroïnes que vous avez mises au monde, à ces Romaines de votre façon? Je ne m'ennuie point, depuis quinze jours, de considérer celle que j'ai reçue la dernière. Je l'ai fait admirer à tous les habiles de notre province: nos orateurs et nos poètes en disent merveilles, mais un docteur de mes voisins qui se met



As we pass from the critics and literary men, who are known to us chiefly by their studied correspondence, to the writers of historical memoirs, and from those who were active in the literary world to those who played their part both in the service of their country and at the desk, we are naturally induced to dwell first upon the name of François, Duke de la Rochefoucauld,<sup>1</sup> Prince of Marsillac, a soldier, a historian, and yet better known to posterity as a moral philosopher, whose maxims have produced so vast a practical influence upon his fellow-countrymen in succeeding ages. La Rochefoucauld was, in an emphatic sense, the creation of the times in which he lived ; not only the creation but the instrument, shaped by the circumstances which surrounded him, and used, like a worthy tool, for lofty purposes. The miseries of his fellow-countrymen made him a soldier of the Fronde : his fruitless patriotic labours, his unsated sympathy, and the triumph of might over right—crowned as that might became with all the glories of a “golden age”—made him a moralist, a philosopher, and a cynic. The strength of his personal philosophy, tried by the most severe test, a threefold domestic

d'ordinaire sur le haut style, en parle certes d'une étrange sorte ; et il n'y a point de mal que vous sachiez jusqu'où vous avez porté son esprit. Il se contentoit le premier jour de dire que votre Emilie étoit la rivale de Caton et de Brutus dans la passion de la liberté. A cette heure, il va bien plus loin ; tantôt il la nomme la possédée du démon de la république, et quelquefois la belle, la raisonnable, la sainte, et l'adorable furie. Voilà d'étranges paroles sur le sujet de votre Romaine ; mais elles ne sont pas sans fondement. Elle inspire, en effet, toute la conjuration, et donne chaleur au parti par le feu qu'elle jette dans l'âme du chef ; elle entreprend, en se vengeant, de venger toute la terre ; elle veut sacrifier à son père une victime qui seroit trop grand pour Jupiter même. C'est, à mon gré, une personne si excellente, que je pense dire peu à son avantage, de dire que vous êtes beaucoup plus heureux en votre race que Pompée n'a été en la sienne, et que votre fille Emilie vaut, sans comparaison, davantage que Cinna son petit-fils. Si celui-ci même a plus de vertu que n'a cru Sénèque, c'est pour être tombé entre vos mains, et à cause que vous avez pris soin de lui. Il vous est obligé de son mérite comme à Auguste de sa dignité ; l'empereur le fit consul, et vous l'avez fait honnête homme.”

<sup>1</sup> 1613-1680.

tragedy, is illustrated by the testimony which Madame de Sévigné bears in one of her letters, dated June 1672. "I saw his heart laid bare," she says, "in this cruel occurrence; he is in the first rank of all that I ever saw of courage, worthiness, tenderness, and reason." When a man knows how to suffer, we conclude that there is something of value in his theory of human life, and that he does not give counsel without sufficient warrant.

No doubt La Rochefoucauld, as a young man, was an intriguer by instinct, and was drawn into the struggles of 1649 and the following years as much by his ambition as by his sympathy with the more serious motives of the Fronde. His passion for the Duchess de Longueville, sister to the Prince de Condé, sufficed to involve both himself and her, her husband and her brother, in rebellion. After the Fronde in its earlier phase had been overcome, the Duchess and her friends stirred up a new one, in which La Rochefoucauld engaged with much enthusiasm. He was declared guilty of high treason, but he continued for some time to continue a course of active hostility to Mazarin. Thanks to his great influence, he was included in the great amnesty of 1650; but he subsequently served under Condé, and was wounded in the struggle which took place in the streets of Paris in 1652, whilst once more fighting in the ranks of the rebels. A few months later, Mazarin having gained the upper hand, he was banished from the capital. It was a fatal moment for France; for the same triumph of the court which resulted in the disgrace of La Rochefoucauld and his friends crippled the whole kingdom, paralysed the power of the Parliament of Paris, and destroyed for a time constitutional government.

On the final re-establishment of peace and the party of the Fronde, La Rochefoucauld fell into general oblivion of the court, and never the

he took up his residence in Paris, and turned his thoughts almost wholly to literature. He was the friend and associate of Mesdames de la Fayette, de Sévigné, and de Sablé, and of the majority of those whose writings have shed lustre on the earlier years of Louis XIV.'s reign. In 1662 were published the *Memoirs of the Regency of Anne of Austria*, and three years later appeared his *Reflections and Opinions, or Moral Maxims*. It is upon the latter work that his fame will always chiefly rest. An acute observer rather than a dogmatist or theoriser, his reflections on the moral basis of human action strike the reader as the ingenious deductions of a shrewd man of the world from the events which have passed day by day before his eyes, and as the essence extracted from a close study of and insight into human character. Clearly and concisely expressed, in terse idiomatic French, which aims at none of the effects of rhetoric, each of his pithy sentences catches the understanding and arrests the attention of the reader. There was nothing previously published in France with which they might be compared ; and if anything of more recent date, such as the numerous good things of Talleyrand, can be placed upon the same level with them, it is only in books of table-talk, of biography, of compiled anecdotes and *bons mots* that we shall encounter them. The *Thoughts* of Pascal are more elaborate, more discursive and disquisitional. They excel the maxims of La Rochefoucauld in literary style, in brilliancy and moral force ; but, published five years later, they do not obscure the originality, or decrease the literary significance of La Rochefoucauld's work.

It is not the object of our author to hold up a moral standard, or to enlarge upon a moral text. His process is simply that of an observer : he exposes, he discriminates, he bares the truth which lies at the bottom of a polished and a selfish condition of society ; but he nowhere expounds or an ideal, or chides the vice which he discovers. He



is, as we have said, a cynic ; drily and indifferently pointing out the weaknesses of his fellow-men, but not caring to show them how these weaknesses may be converted into strength—though he himself knows well how it might be done, at least in his own case. He is a philosopher, but not a teacher ; he can read others, but can direct himself only. “Self-love is one of the two aspects of life ; La Rochefoucauld has never detected the other—the attraction which draws us to each other, and which becomes a virtue when we govern ourselves according to a moral order. La Rochefoucauld knows men ; he does not know man.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus the impression which La Rochefoucauld leaves upon us is an uncomfortable and disturbing sense of the pettiness of humanity. His revelations are incalculably serviceable to us ; but their use is only realised when we ourselves pass beyond the point where our cynic chooses to stop, and argue from the basis which he selected as his limit. Many of his reflections are by this time the proverbs of civilised nations ; every one of them is the text of a sermon which has been preached over and over again. Let us glance at a few examples :—

“Greater virtues are needed to support good than bad fortune.  
We are never so happy or so miserable as we think.

Treason is committed more frequently through weakness than through a deliberate design to betray.

Hypocrisy is a homage which vice pays to virtue.

We do not long give pleasure when we have only one kind of wit.

Reconciliation with our enemies is but the desire to improve our condition, a weariness of war, and a fear of some evil occurrence.

It is more disgraceful to mistrust our friends than to be deceived by them.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. xiii. p. 214.

<sup>2</sup> There is at all events no cynicism here ; and it is to be observed that a few



Mistrust justifies the deceit of others.

Men would not live long in society if they were not the dupes of one another.

We give pleasure in the intercourse of life more frequently by our faults than by our good qualities.

The resolution never to deceive exposes us to frequent deceit."<sup>1</sup>

An acute discriminator of character, a contemporary of La Rochefoucauld, says of him : " He had always an habitual irresolution, but I know not to what to attribute it. . . . We see its effects although we do not know its cause. He was never a warrior, though he was very much a soldier. He was never actually a good courtier, although he had always the genuine intention to be one. He was never a good partisan, although he has been all his life allied to some party or other. That appearance of shamefacedness and timidity, which you see in him in the civil war, was in business matters turned into an air of apology. He always thought he stood in need of apology, which, coupled with his maxims, which do not display much faith in virtue, and with his practice, which

of La Rochefoucauld's maxims are entirely in harmony with the loftiest kind of morality.

<sup>1</sup> " Il faut de plus grandes vertus pour soutenir la bonne fortune que la mauvaise.

On n'est jamais si heureux ni si malheureux qu'on s'imagine.

L'on fait plus souvent des trahisons par faiblesse que par un dessein formé de trahir.

L'hypocrisie est un hommage que le vice rend à la vertu.

On ne plaît pas longtemps quand on n'a qu'une sorte d'esprit.

La réconciliation avec nos ennemis n'est qu'un désir de rendre notre condition meilleure, une lassitude de la guerre, et une crainte de quelque mauvais événement.

Il est plus honteux de se défier de ses amis, que d'en être trompé.

Notre défiance justifie la tromperie d'autrui.

Les hommes ne vivraient pas longtemps en société, s'ils n'étaient les dupes les uns des autres.

Nous plaisons plus souvent dans le commerce de la vie par nos défauts que par nos bonnes qualités.

L'intention de ne jamais tromper nous expose à être souvent trompés."

has always been to extricate himself with as much impatience as he became involved, makes me conclude that he would have done much better to grow acquainted with himself, and to confine himself to passing, as he might have done, for the most polished courtier, and the most honourable man, in regard to every-day life, who has been known in his generation."

The estimate is evidently shrewd, even to us who know La Rochefoucauld only through his works, and by the more prominent circumstances of his life. It is in fact the estimate of a close student of human nature, the Cardinal de Retz,<sup>1</sup> whose *Memoirs* give us many faithful pictures of the age of Louis XIV., and throw light on many a chapter of literary history which would otherwise be obscure.

## § 2. HISTORIANS.

Jean Francois Paul de Gondi, afterwards Cardinal de Retz, born at Montmirail, destined at an early age for the Church, although by talent and disposition he was fit for anything rather than the life of an ecclesiastic, was one of the arch-plotters of that seditious and ambitious party who made the miseries of the lower orders, and the more or less justifiable struggles of the genuine patriots of the Fronde, a pretext for the advancement of their own schemes. Bold and unscrupulous from the beginning to the end of his career, Gondi made his *début* in the conspiracy fomented by Bouillon and others at Sedan, in 1641. On this occasion, for some reason of his own, "the young abbé, gallant, and duellist," as a competent historian describes him, recommended his associates to refrain from civil war, and, when he could not

<sup>1</sup> 1614-1679.

persuade them, betook himself to Paris, volunteered his services to the queen, and was sent to Brussels to negotiate for the assistance of a Spanish army. A little later, considering that his exertions had been ill repaid, he threw himself into the party of the Fronde, stirred up the Prince de Condé against Mazarin, instigated the clergy of Paris to oppose the loan which the cardinal was endeavouring to raise, and once more intrigued with Spain, secretly introducing a Spanish agent into the Parliament of Paris. After passing over anew to the court party, he was made coadjutor to his uncle, the Archbishop of Paris, and made his first bid for a cardinal's hat, "of which the brilliant red colour drives crazy the generality of those who are honoured by it,"<sup>1</sup> and which was refused him. Upon this he identified himself with the party of the princes, sowed enmity between the Duke d'Orléans and Mazarin, and even went so far as to foment a rising of the Paris *bourgeoisie* against the queen. The Fronde suppressed, he placed his services for the third time at the command of the queen, at the same time vainly endeavouring to organise a Third-Estate in the State. He was consoled, or rather bought off, by the Court, who obtained for him his coveted cardinalate from Innocent X., the latter being perhaps more ready to grant the young king's request because he knew that it would annoy and disconcert Mazarin. But de Retz's triumph was hardly worth the reaping. Towards the close of the same year he headed a large deputation of the clergy to the king at Compiègne, in order to entreat the latter's return to Paris. Louis did in fact return shortly afterwards; but Mazarin's jealousy of the younger and too ambitious cardinal was not satisfied until de Retz had been thrown into prison at Vincennes. The Parisian clergy did all they could to secure his release, but in vain. The king took the same view of the matter as his minister, and all

<sup>1</sup> De Retz's own words.



that de Retz could obtain was his removal to Nantes, from whence he presently escaped, and took refuge in Rome. His political career was at an end; and in the obscurity of a forced exile he devoted himself to the composition of his *Memoirs*. These latter, not published until after his death, have given him a posthumous fame greater than any which he could earn, when living, by his unstable, insincere, and often unpatriotic efforts.

Of the *Memoirs* of Cardinal de Retz Voltaire has remarked that they were written with an air of grandeur, an impetuosity of genius, and an inequality, which are the characteristics of his conduct. Another of his countrymen<sup>1</sup> speaks more warmly still. He says: "The style of de Retz is of the finest order of speech; it is full of fire . . . and unites to grandeur a supreme air of negligence, which constitutes its charm. Its expression is often lively, picturesque in its flow, always suited to the genius of the French language, yet full of imagination, and, at times, of magnificence." This praise can, above all, be applied to de Retz's sketches of character, and to some of his descriptions of scenes of which he was an eye-witness. One of his happiest efforts, and one which shows him at his best, is his character of Richelieu. It is shrewd, candid, and, considering how easily the writer might have been drawn into painting a more illustrious cardinal and a more successful politician in sombre hues, if anything too appreciative.

"Cardinal Richelieu was well born. His youth emitted scintillations of his worth: he distinguished himself in the Sorbonne; it was early perceived that he had force and vivacity of wit. As a rule he took a decision very well. He kept his word in cases where a high interest did not oblige him to the contrary; and if need were, he forgot nothing to maintain the appearance of good faith. He was not libe

<sup>1</sup> Sainte-Be



than he promised, and he gave a savour to his kindnesses in an admirable manner. He loved glory far more than morality sanctions, but it must be confessed that he abused no more than his merit entitled him the dispensation which he had taken with regard to his excessive ambition. He had neither a mind nor a heart superior to dangers; but he had neither inferior to them; and it may be said that he rather forestalled them by his sagacity than surmounted them by his firmness. He was a good friend; he would even have wished to be beloved by the public; but though he had the politeness, the outward appearance, and many other parts calculated to produce this result, he never had that indescribable something, which is yet, in this matter more of an acquisition than in any other. By his power and regal pomp he annihilated the personal majesty of the king; but he discharged the functions of royalty with so much dignity that he must have been no ordinary man not to confound right and wrong in so doing. He distinguished more judiciously than any other man in the world between the bad and the worse, between the good and the better, which is a great quality in a minister. . . . You will readily conclude that a man who has so many great qualities, and so many appearances even of those which he has not, maintains with tolerable ease in the world that kind of respect which eliminates scorn from hatred, and which, in a state wherein there are no longer any laws, supplies, at least for a time, their want."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Le cardinal de Richelieu avait de la naissance. Sa jeunesse jeta des étincelles de son mérite : il se distingua en Sorbonne ; on remarqua de fort bonne heure qu'il avait de la force et de la vivacité dans l'esprit. Il prenait d'ordinaire très-bien son parti. Il était homme de parole, où un grand intérêt ne l'obligeait pas au contraire ; et en cas, il n'oubliait rien pour sauver les apparences de la bonne foi. Il n'était pas libéral ; mais il donnait plus qu'il ne promettait. Il aimait la gloire beaucoup plus que la morale ne le permet, mais il faut avouer qu'il n'abusait qu'à proportion de son mérite de la dispense qu'il avait prise sur le point de l'excès de son ambition. Il n'avait ni l'esprit ni le cœur au-dessus des périls ; il n'avait ni l'un ni l'autre au-dessous ; et l'on peut dire qu'il en prévint davantage par sa sagacité qu'il n'en surmonta par sa fermeté. Il était bon ami ; il eût même souhaité d'être aimé du public ; mais quoi qu'il eût la civilité, l'extérieur et beaucoup d'autres parties propres à cet effet, il n'en eut jamais le je ne sais quoi, qui est encore en cette matière, plus acquis qu'en  
 it par son pouvoir et par son faste royal la majesté  
 avec tant de dignité les fonctions de la

Amongst the other historians of the earlier part of the *Grand Monarque's* reign was François Eudes de Mézeray,<sup>1</sup> one of the many literary men who had reason to be grateful for the munificent patronage of Richelieu. He was appointed historiographer to the king, and in 1649 he was selected to occupy the place in the Academy rendered vacant by Voiture's death. The honour was not undeserved, for six years before he had issued the first volume of his *History of France*. In 1667 he published a *Chronological Abstract of the History of France*, which, if neither very eloquent nor very philosophic, yet bears evidence of his industry and straightforwardness.<sup>2</sup> A contemporary lady-author of *Memoirs*, chiefly biographical, was Madame de Motteville,<sup>3</sup> daughter of a Norman father and a Spanish mother, and attached to the person of Anne of Austria. Left a widow whilst still young, she became the personal friend and companion of the Queen-regent after the death of Louis XIII., being at that time no more than twenty-two years of age; and in this capacity she was able to follow the politics of the court during the existence of the Fronde. Her *Memoirs* extend over the period between the marriage and death of Anne of Austria; and besides being valuable as a contribution to the history of the age, they are written with no small amount of elegance and spirit.

royauté, qu'il fallait n'être pas du vulgaire pour ne pas confondre le bien et le mal en ce fait. Il distinguait plus judicieusement qu'un homme du monde entre le mal et le pis, entre le bien et le mieux, ce qui est une grande qualité pour un ministre. . . . Vous jugez facilement qu'un homme qui a autant de grandes qualités et autant d'apparences de celles même qu'il n'avait pas, se conserve assez aisément dans le monde cette sorte de respect qui démêle le mépris d'avec la haine, et qui dans un Etat où il n'y a plus de lois, supplée au moins pour quelque temps à leur défaut."

<sup>1</sup> 1610-1683.

<sup>2</sup> Boileau pays Mézeray a compliment in his *Art poétique*, bk. ii.

"Loin de moi ces rimeurs craintifs . . .

Ils n'osent un moment perdre un sujet de vue ;

Pour prendre Dôle il faut que Lille soit rendue

Et que leur vers exact, ainsi que Mézeray,

Ait fait déjà tomber les remparts de Courtrai."

<sup>3</sup> 1621-1689.



Another minor historian of the age of Louis XIV., Bussy-Rabutin,<sup>1</sup> was one of those men who have had no further tendency of literary fame than a lease terminating with their lifetime, and who have "shone in the world to be eclipsed by posterity."<sup>2</sup> Like La Rochefoucauld, St. Evremond, Saint Simon, and two or three more of his special literary denomination, he was a man born in the highest grade of society, who, not satisfied with social distinction, coveted literary fame in addition; and it is probable that, before he had tasted many of the pleasures of a satisfied ambition, he was inclined to wish that he had coveted it less eagerly. Bussy-Rabutin was a dull man by nature, and a wit by assiduous cultivation. He had apparently more knack of expression than ideas; and though, from one point of view and in respect of one of his works, his *Histoire Amoureuse*, he must be considered eminently readable, his literary répute has always been more or less at a discount. A libertine, with all the appetite and little of the relieving archness of La Fontaine, he unfortunately for himself carried his lack of circumspection into his writings, and that in so outrageous a form that his most ambitious work ruined him beyond redemption. His *Memoirs* and *Correspondence* reveal the poverty of his mind and judgment; and if these were all he had written he might have remained in the list of those nonentities whose books are never republished, or never even printed, and of whom a literary chronicler takes no account. But in 1665, the very year in which he was elected a member of the Academy in the place previously occupied by Chastelet and d'Ablancourt, he issued a *Histoire Amoureuse des Gaules*. In this loose chronicle he had the heartlessness to include his own cousin, Madame de Sévigné; and others who, with far greater claim to distinction, had probably even still more powerful avengers. However this may be, he paid in his own person for all concoctors of scandalous records, and for all the

<sup>1</sup> 1618-1693.<sup>2</sup> Gérusez, *Histoire de la littérature française*, vol. ii. p. 344.

shameless libertines of his time. An example was necessary : Paris became violently virtuous ; Bussy-Rabutin was cast into the Bastille, and was made the subject of a score of pamphlets and epigrams. He lived in disgrace for nearly thirty years, and the most abject flatteries and entreaties could not induce the king to forgive him. As for his literary style, no one has written better of him than his friend Saint Evremond, according to whom "his elocution is pure, and his expressions are natural, noble, and concise. His portraits especially have a negligent, frank, and original grace." We may add a grain of salt when this over-friendly critic proceeds to say that the wit of Bussy-Rabutin was marvellous.



## CHAPTER III.

## § 1. BOILEAU.

WE come now to a great critic, the direct successor of Malherbe, who, perhaps more than any other Frenchman, may be considered as the central literary figure of the seventeenth century—or, at all events, of the long period comprised in the reign of Louis XIV. We have several times referred to Boileau,<sup>1</sup> to his personal influence or his critical judgment, and we shall have to refer to him frequently again. No man mixed himself more completely with the literary activity of his age: no man was more ubiquitous, more generally deferred to, more in relation with men of learning or imagination, better able, up to a certain point, to measure and to classify his contemporaries.

Nicolas Boileau Despréaux, a Parisian, son of a clerk to the Parliament of Paris, was born in the year that saw the first representation of Corneille's *Cid*, and died but a few months before the birth of Jean Jacques Rousseau. The eulogist and the disciple of Malherbe, he lived long enough to mark the budding genius of Voltaire, and to perceive the dawn of that new philosophy which was to dissolve, like an alembic, so much of what he held most sacred and valuable. Of all that he saw and all that he understood, Boileau was no mere critic from the outside; he was *pars magna* of the

<sup>1</sup> 1636-1711.

life and genius of his age. One of the special objects of the king's favour, commissioned by the *Grand Monarque*, in conjunction with Racine, to write a history of his so-called glorious reign,<sup>1</sup>—a work which, we need hardly say, was never carried out,—he enjoyed throughout his life the influence and consideration due to a man of pre-eminent talent and quickness of wit. His father had trained him in the study of the law, and subsequently of theology. He went, indeed, so far as to take holy orders, and held a small benefice worth some thirty pounds a year; but, smitten, like Racine, by the expanding spirit of magnificence in action and idea, which was the strongest manifestation of Louis' influence upon his time, he struck out a more congenial path for himself; and whilst his friend turned from the asceticism of Port-Royal to the splendours of the stage, Boileau forsook law and theology for satire. At the age of thirty he published his *Satires*, which instantly established his claim to be considered the most formidable literary critic of the day, and first attracted the notice of the king. If Boileau was an acute satirist, he was at the same time a not over-prudent courtier. He had a whip for the writers of bad books, and for the ridicules and anomalies of society; but he seldom lavished indiscriminate flattery and fulsome praise on the young monarch, who being about the same age as himself, had just escaped from the leading strings of the ambitious Mazarin, and was giving evidence of the personal authority and power of will which he afterwards so clearly manifested. Boileau meant to succeed from a worldly point of view, without breaking his spine by too much bowing and scraping; and having shown that he could write excellent satires, without giving too great offence to the general public, he certainly deserved success. There was plenty of work for Boileau to do; and he prosecuted his campaign against bad taste with infinite zest, although

<sup>1</sup> Louis made them his "historiographers" in 1677.

not with the vehement indignation of a Juvenal. If it was the age of Corneille, it was also the age in which Scarron pretended to rival Molière. It was an age of newfangled burlesque, in which everything gave place to broad and reckless humour; an age of abortive epics,<sup>1</sup> in which grand aims fell before impotence of thought and poverty of expression. Boileau came forward as the champion of good taste, as the legitimate successor of Malherbe; and he had no sooner spoken than all whose opinion was worth having admitted the sufficiency of his credentials.

From 1669 until the end of the century he employed himself, now and again, in the composition of elaborate and poetical *Epîtres* to his friends—letters embodying sound literary and social judgments, themselves to a certain extent satirical, and preferred by many subsequent critics to his earlier *Satires*. Greater still as a work of art, and ranked by Voltaire as even superior to Horace's famous Epistle *ad Pisones*, was the *Art Poétique*, published in 1673. His *Lutrin*, a heroi-comic poem, was the production of Boileau's full maturity, and in it his ease of versification and polish of expression are most distinctly illustrated. In addition to these poetical works, Boileau wrote, in excellent prose, a free translation of Longinus' treatise *On the Sublime*, as well as critical reflections on that author, several important dissertations, and other minor scattered pieces.

Boileau probably began to write verses in his boyhood. He was the eleventh child of his father; his eldest brother, Gilles Boileau, was an author before Nicolas was born, whilst another brother, Jacques, was a historian, who acquired at least notoriety. It was in fact a studious family, and the younger son acquired literary tastes as naturally as he learned how to speak. His first satire, written on the model of

<sup>1</sup> *Moïse*, by Saint-Amant; *Alaric*, by Scudéry; *Saint-Louis*, by Le Moyne, and many others.



Juvenal—though without the strength of the Latin poet—was composed before he was twenty-five. It was discovered by Furetière amongst the papers of Gilles Boileau ; and the finder, himself something of a satirist, admired the verses, and showed them to his acquaintance. In this manner Boileau's earliest work is said to have been published without his knowledge ; and he literally "woke to find himself famous." He forthwith made congenial friends ; was invited to the *réunions* of Madame de Sablé and Mademoiselle de Scudéry ; was sought out by Chapelain, Cotin, and others ; was able to cultivate the acquaintance of Madame de Sévigné, Madame de la Fayette, and such men as Molière, La Fontaine, Racine, and La Rochefoucauld. Thenceforth Boileau was in his element. He never married—hardly ever fell in love ; but his friendships for literary men were often warm and enduring. Between himself and Racine in particular a close tie was formed, which was broken only by the death of the dramatist, who, on his deathbed, declared that he deemed it a happiness to die before his friend. On the decease of Boileau's father the poet inherited a competence ; he instantly made himself the centre of a literary club, assembling in his own house a little circle of harmonious spirits, of whom the earliest and most constant were Molière (whom they called Gélaste), Racine (Acante), La Fontaine (Polyphile), Boileau (Ariste),<sup>1</sup> and Chapelle.

The fame of Boileau rapidly grew, especially after he had published his collected *Satires*. It was no doubt well for him that he began as a satirist, for we may question whether the *Lutrin*, for instance, would have made anything like the same impression upon the court and the town. Boileau was a writer of magnificent French, he was clear in his judgment of men, and he expressed himself tersely and to the point, whether he chose to praise or blame. But he has none, or

<sup>1</sup> La Fontaine makes mention of this circle in *Les Amours de Psyché et de Cupidon*. See *infra*, p. 279.



little, of the poetic gift which could write sweetly on a trifle. He was the poet of common sense and good taste ; but this by itself is not enough to charm a wide audience. The fact was that Boileau caught the fickle fancy of a somewhat trivial generation ; but, having caught it, he knew how to secure and keep it ; and that which he gave made men overlook that which he had not to give. No French critic's name stands as high as that of Boileau, and deservedly ; for it is impossible to read his works—or at all events his literary judgments—without admitting his power and refinement. A parallel might be drawn between Boileau and Dr. Johnson ; for in one respect at least the two were remarkable alike. Both were more or less sound appraisers of the brains of their fellow-men ; both were esteemed by their contemporaries with almost extravagant appreciation ; and both retained their authority by the very candour and evident honesty of their judgments. Many anecdotes of this latter peculiarity are recorded of Boileau. Louis XIV. once made a copy of verses, and submitted them to the critic, in whose opinion he had much confidence. “Sire,” said Boileau, after glancing at the lines, “nothing can hinder your Majesty from doing what you wish to do : you wished to write bad verses, and you have succeeded.” Once again, an idle duke, having obtained a sonnet, written by an obscure rhymester, showed it to Boileau, who shrugged his shoulders. The duke took the verses to the Dauphine, who praised them ; whereupon the busybody returned to the poet and said : “The king likes it, and the princess likes it !” “His Majesty,” rejoined Boileau, “is excellent in the taking of towns ; the princess is a lady of infinite grace ; but allow me to say that I know more about verses than either.” Of course the duke hurried to the king, but all that Louis said was, “I regret to say that I think Boileau is right.” And yet this honest critic was at times, to say the least of it, courtly ; and for his reward he

retained the favour of the arbitrary monarch to the end of his life.

It is time to pass from the man to his works ; and the instant we do so, how many an oracular sentence, how many a rounded phrase or couplet, how many a strikingly just—with here and there a strikingly unjust—estimate, which has ticketed his contemporaries to the end of time, crowds in upon our memory. It was Boileau who praised a poetaster's play as being "in so much favour in the provinces," who declared that "nothing is fine but what is true." If some of his judgments appear exaggerated, certainly the majority of them have secured the sanction of posterity. Of Racan he said : "Racan could sing in the absence of a Homer."<sup>1</sup> Of three poets somewhat unequally yoked, he said : "In Gombaud, Maynard, and Malleville, you can scarcely admire two or three lines in a thousand."<sup>2</sup> He makes fun of Théophile de Viau ; he extols d'Urfé's *Astrée* to the skies ; he is enthusiastic (at least with his pen) in Corneille's favour, writing the spirited quatrain which we have already once quoted,<sup>3</sup> and speaks also of the "sweet terror" and "charming pity" excited by the great dramatist. Of Chapelain and his *Pucelle*, he writes : "Cursed be the author whose harsh and coarse vigour, torturing his brain, rhymed in spite of Minerva."<sup>4</sup> Of Georges de Scudéry he says : "Thrice happy Scudéry, whose fertile pen can without difficulty generate a volume in a month."<sup>5</sup> Of Molière he says that "Perchance he might have reaped the meed of his art if, less friendly to the people,

<sup>1</sup> *Satire* ix. 44.—See bk. iv., ch. 3, p. 65, note i.

<sup>2</sup> "A peine dans Gombaud, Maynard, et Malleville,

En peut on admirer deux ou trois entre mille."—*Art Poétique*, ii. 97.

<sup>3</sup> See bk. iv., ch. 4, p. 94.

<sup>4</sup> "Maudit soit l'auteur dur dont l'âpre et rude verve  
Son cerveau tenaillant rima malgré Minerve."

In the little coterie which met in Boileau's house the fines consisted in the enforced reading of a certain number of lines from the *Pucelle*.

<sup>5</sup> "Bienheureux Scudéry dont la fertile plume

Peut tous les mois sans peine enfanter un volume."—*Satire* ii.

he had not often made his figures grimace in his learned pictures, neglected the pleasant and the refined for the burlesque, and shamelessly allied Terence with Tabarin.”<sup>1</sup> Of d’Arnauld, the father of the Port-Royalists, brother of Mère Angelique, Boileau’s judgment is at once lofty and marked by the same generous enthusiasm which he often breathes into his laudatory notices. It was written in the form of an epitaph, and is the more honourable to our author as he knew that the Jansenist had died in disgrace at Brussels, and was strongly disliked by the king.

“At the foot of this altar of rude construction  
Lies, without pomp, enclosed in a simple coffin,  
The most learned mortal who ever wrote ;  
Arnauld, who, informed in grace by Jesus Christ,  
Fighting for the Church, has, within the Church itself,  
Endured more than one outrage and more than one anathema.  
Full of the fire which the Holy Spirit breathed into his heart,  
He overthrew Pelagius, smote Calvin with his thunder,  
Confounded the morality of all false doctors.  
But as a reward for his zeal we have seen him repelled,  
Oppressed in a hundred places by their black conspiracy,  
A wanderer, poor, banished, prescribed, persecuted ;  
And even on his death their only half-extinguished fury  
Would never have left his ashes in repose,  
If God himself had not concealed here the bones  
Of his holy follower from these devouring wolves.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “ C’est par là que Molière, illustrant ses écrits,  
Peut-être de son art eût emporté le prix,  
Si moins ami du peuple en ses doctes peintures  
Il n’eût point fait souvent grimacer ses figures,  
Quitté pour le bouffon l’agréable et le fin  
Et sans honte à Térence allié Tabarin.”

<sup>2</sup> “ Au pied de cet autel de structure grossière,  
Gît sans pompe, enfermé dans une vile bière,  
Le plus savant mortel qui jamais ait écrit ;  
Arnauld, qui sur la grâce instruit par Jésus Christ,  
Combattant pour l’Eglise, a, dans l’Eglise même,  
Souffert plus d’un outrage et plus d’un anathème.”

The poet, to whom religion and morality were by no means empty names, does not leave us in a moment's doubt as to the tendency of his opinions and sympathies.<sup>1</sup>

Judging from antecedent facts, from the characteristic genius of Frenchmen for the epistolary style, from the discursive ease and finish of Boileau, and from his evident admiration for Horace, whom he has imitated in the three special directions in which his somewhat unbending muse permitted him to follow his master, we might have expected that the *Epîtres* of Boileau would be the strongest and most elegant productions of the poet. Probably it will be as a rule admitted that this description faithfully applies to them. But we must at once allow that they are undoubtedly inferior

Plein du feu qu'en son cœur soufla l'esprit divin,  
Il terrassa Pélagé, il foudroya Calvin ;  
De tous les faux docteurs confondit la morale.  
Mais pour fruit de son zèle, on l'a vu rebuté,  
En cent lieux opprimé par leur noire cabale ;  
Errant, pauvre, banni, proscriit, persécuté ;  
Et même par sa mort leur fureur mal éteinte  
N'aurait jamais laissé ses cendres en repos,  
Si Dieu lui même ici de son ouaille sainte  
A ces loups dévorants n'avait caché les os."

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes the satirist would be even more personally bitter, as when he wrote—

" La figure de Pellisson  
Est une figure effroyable :  
Mais quoique ce vilain garçon  
Soit plus laid qu'un singe et qu'un diable  
Sapho lui trouve des appas ;  
Mais je ne m'en étonne pas,  
Car chacun aime son semblable."

It was upon Sapho (Mademoiselle de Scudéry) that Boileau was most severe in his *Dialogue des Héros des Romans*, a lively and telling parody of the language of the *Pays du Tendre*. Or take the cruel verses which he wrote on the husband of la Champmeslé, the actress whom Racine taught, whom La Fontaine loved, and whom Boileau himself had visited, and of which we can only give the first three lines :—

" De six amants contents et non jaloux,  
Qui tour à tour servaient  
Le moins volage éta



to the *Epistles* of Horace. In language, setting model against model, the Frenchman compares favourably with the Roman. In connection and sequence they display the more balanced mind, the more sensible character of the two. But in that subtle variety of thought and exquisite flavour of treatment for which the author of the *Epistles* is famous, Boileau is unmistakably his second. The most admired of the latter's *Epîtres* is the fourth, written in 1672, in which he celebrates the passage over the Rhine and the conquest of Holland, but humorously complains that the king takes places for which it is difficult to find a rhyme, and expresses a wish that Louis were fighting "nearer to Asia," where more melodious names are to be found. We shall only give the opening lines of this *Epître*, which were dedicated to "the king :"—

"In vain my Muse, always ready to praise you,  
Has a score of times attempted the conquest of Holland ;  
That country, of which a hundred cities have not been  
able to resist you,  
Great king, is not so easy to be overcome in verse.  
The harsh and barbarous names of the towns which you  
take  
Present on all sides only eccentric syllables ;  
And, with startled ears, we must, from the Yssel,  
Run as far as Texel, to find a suitable word ;  
Yes, everywhere each place possesses a name  
Which holds out against poetry, and destroys its  
harmony ;  
And who can without shuddering attack Woerden ?  
What verse would not halt at the mere name of Heusden ?  
What muse, however ready to rhyme in every spot,  
Would dare to approach the shores of the Zuyder-sea ?  
How can one in happy verse besiege Doesburg,  
Zutphen, Wageningen, Harderwyk, Knotzemburg ?  
There is not a single fort amongst those which you take  
reds

Which cannot delay a versifier six weeks ;  
 And everywhere on the Waal, as well as on the Leck,  
 Verse is routed, and the poet is nonplussed."<sup>1</sup>

The mock-heroic poem *Le Lutrin* has been called a triumph of versification, and is admirable for its conception and sustained execution. If any Frenchman could have written a lofty epic, we are tempted to say that it would have been Boileau ; for no one has written finer episodes, and no one has shown a better command of the principles of epic construction. But the special gift and facility which made him admire and imitate Horace instead of Virgil, made him a writer of satires and epistles instead of an epic. This simply amounts to saying that Boileau was a satirist, with all the prominent features of the national genius ; and no true satirist has been a true epic poet. If Boileau had written a *Pucelle*, he would not have been a Chapelain ; but, happily for France, the *Pucelle* did not tempt him. Yet he wrote the *Lutrin*, and the *Lutrin* is at least epically treated. It consists of six books or cantos,

<sup>1</sup> "En vain, pour te louer, ma muse toujours prête  
 Vingt fois de la Hollande a tenté la conquête :  
 Ce pays, où cent murs n'ont pu te résister,  
 Grand roi, n'est pas en vers si facile à dompter.  
 Des villes que tu prends les noms durs et barbares  
 N'offrent de toutes parts que syllabes bizarres ;  
 Et l'oreille effrayée, il faut, depuis l'Issel,  
 Pour trouver un bon mot, courir jusqu'au Tessel.  
 Oui, partout de son nom chaque place munie,  
 Tient bon contre le vers, en détruit l'harmonie.  
 Et qui peut sans frémir aborder Woerden ?  
 Quel vers ne tomberait au seul nom de Heusden ?  
 Quelle muse à rimer en tous lieux disposée  
 Oserait approcher des bords du Zuiderzée ?  
 Comment en vers heureux assiéger Doësbourg,  
 Zutphen, Wageningen, Harderwic, Knotzembourg ?  
 Il n'est fort, entre ceux que tu prends par centaines,  
 Qui ne puisse arrêter un rimeur six semaines :  
 Et partout sur le Whal, ainsi que sur le Leck,  
 Le vers est en déroute, et le poète à sec."

and originated, as Boileau himself states in the preface, through "a petty quarrel that happened in one of the most celebrated churches of Paris (la Sainte Chapelle) between the treasurer and the master of the choir. That fact is true, and that is all. The rest is mere fiction from the beginning to the end, and all the actors in it are not only invented but industriously drawn, quite opposite to the true character of the ministers of that church." In this poem the master of the choir is depicted as forward and encroaching, and as having endeavoured to invade the rights and privileges of the treasurer. The latter, not brooking this, bethought himself of setting up again in the choir a sort of large lectern (*Lutrin*), which the first had removed. Hence the cause of the quarrel which forms the subject of the *Lutrin*. We will give as a specimen the lines in which are described how, after Brontin, l'Amour, and Boitrude, three partisans of the treasurer, had set out in the darkness of night, to set up again the lectern, Sloth was roused by a cry of Discord, and made a speech to Night.

"The moon, who spied from heaven their haughty mien,  
Withdrew on their behalf her peaceful light,  
Then Discord smiled, and when they caught her sight,  
Uttered a cry of joy which pierced the skies.  
The air, which groaned at the dread goddess' shriek,  
Speeds far as Cîteaux there to waken Sloth.  
There she within a dormitory dwells ;  
The careless Pleasures gambol all around :  
One, in a corner, kneads the Canon's fat ;  
Another, laughing, grinds the monks' vermilion :  
Indulgence serves her with devoted looks,  
And on her Sleep her poppies ever pours.  
That evening twice as much—yet all in vain ;  
Sloth at the noise awakens in alarm :  
When Night, e'er her dark mantle wraps the world,  
Wounds her anew with a disastrous tale,

Tells of the treasurer's recent enterprise,  
How, 'neath the holy Chapel's sacred walls,  
She saw three warriors, enemies to peace,  
March 'neath the shelter of her sable cloak ;  
And Discord threatens there more vast to grow ;  
To-morrow dawn will see a desk appear,  
Raised by a crowd of restive mutineers ;  
Thus heaven wrote it in the book of fate.  
At this sad tale, closed by a deep-drawn sigh,  
Sloth, all in tears, half-raised upon her arm,  
Opens a languid eye, and with faint voice  
Lets fall these words, broke off a score of times :  
' O Night ! what hast thou said ? what fiend on earth  
Breathes into all hearts fatigue and war ?  
Ah ! where has fled that time, that happy time,  
When kings the style of ' slothful ' highly prized,  
Slept on their throne, and served me unabashed,  
Trusting their sceptre to some mayor or count ?  
No busy care approached their peaceful court ;  
By night they rested, all the day they slept ;  
Only in spring, when Flora in the plains  
Silenced the noisy breathings of the winds,  
Four harnessed oxen with slow tranquil pace,  
Through streets of Paris dragged the lazy king.  
That pleasant age is gone. Th' unpitying heaven  
Has set upon the throne an ever-active prince. . . .  
When by that prince, to distant exile driven,  
The Church, at least, I thought would shelter me ;  
E'en there my hope to reign unscared was vain :  
Monks, abbés, priors, arm themselves against me. . . .  
And now a desk will turn all upside down,  
And drives me forth from this loved home again !  
Thou kind and sombre comrade of my rest,  
To such black forfeits wilt thou lend thy shade ?  
Ah Night ! if in the arms of love so oft  
I taught thee pleasures, which I hide from Day,  
At least allow not . . . At this word o'ercome,  
Sloth feels her tongue lie frozen in her mouth,



And, tired of talking, 'neath the effort sank,  
Sighed, stretched her arms, and shut her eyes, and slept." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "La lune, qui du ciel voit leur démarche altière,  
Retire en leur faveur sa paisible lumière.  
La Discorde en sourit, et, les suivant des yeux,  
De joie, en les voyant, pousse un cri dans les cieux.  
L'air, qui gémit du cri de l'horrible déesse,  
Va jusque dans Cîteaux réveiller la Mollesse.  
C'est là qu'en un dortoir elle fait son séjour.  
Les Plaisirs nonchalants folâtrant à l'entour :  
L'un pétrit dans un coin l'embonpoint des chanoines,  
L'autre broie en riant le vermillon des moines.  
La Volupté la sert avec des yeux dévots,  
Et toujours le Sommeil lui verse des pavots.  
Ce soir, plus que jamais, en vain il les redouble.  
La Mollesse à ce bruit se réveille, se trouble ;  
Quand la Nuit, qui déjà va tout envelopper,  
D'un funeste récit vient encor la frapper,  
Lui conte du prélat l'entreprise nouvelle :  
Au pied des murs sacrés d'une sainte chapelle,  
Elle a vu trois guerriers, ennemis de la paix,  
Marcher à la faveur de ses voiles épais ;  
La Discorde en ces lieux menace de s'accroître ;  
Demain avec l'aurore un lutrin va paraître,  
Qui doit y soulever en peuple de mutins ;  
Ainsi le ciel l'écrit au livre des Destins,  
A ce triste discours, qu'un long soupir achève,  
La Mollesse, en pleurant, sur un bras se relève,  
Ouvre un œil languissant, et, d'une faible voix,  
Laisse tomber ces mots qu'elle interrompt vingt fois :  
' O Nuit, que m'as-tu dit ? quel démon sur la terre  
Souffle dans tous les cœurs la fatigue et la guerre ?  
Hélas ! qu'est devenu ce temps, cet heureux temps  
Où les rois s'honoraient du nom de fainéants,  
S'endormaient sur le trône, et, me servant sans honte,  
Laisaient leur sceptre aux mains ou d'un maire ou d'un comte ?  
Aucun soin n'approchait de leur paisible cour ;  
On reposait la nuit, on dormait tout le jour.  
Seulement au printemps, quand Flore dans les plaines  
Faisait taire des vents les bruyantes haleines,  
Quatre bœufs attelés, d'un pas tranquille et lent,  
Promenaient dans Paris le monarque indolent.  
Ce doux siècle n'est plus. Le Ciel impitoyable  
A placé sur le trône un prince infatigable. . . .  
Je croyais, loin des lieux d'où ce prince m'exile,  
Que l'Eglise du moins m'assurait un asile ;

Great power of language, honesty of purpose, delicate raillery, elegance of diction, accurate allegory, and often subtle flattery, distinguish Boileau's style, whilst his character stands out favourably amongst the men who surrounded him. Sarcastic only when writing, but always willing to aid even his enemies, facile of conversation, and far from morose in daily intercourse—except during the latter part of his life—never denying a friend—and completely deserving the description which an English poet has given of one of his heroes, “truest friend and noblest foe”—seldom humbling himself merely before the great, not even before the king, he appears to me the model of the literary men of his age. He was held in great consideration by his fellow-countrymen during his lifetime, and by some of the most eminent literary Englishmen; but he is not generally held in the same estimation at present, at least in France, as he was before. Can it be that he did not sacrifice enough on the altar of Eros, or may the cause be found in the appellation “Lawgiver of Parnassus” which he received in former times, and the special dislike the majority of Frenchmen have to all kinds of lawgivers? <sup>1</sup>

Mais en vain j'espérais y régner sans effroi :  
 Moines, abbés, prieurs, tout s'arme contre moi. . . .  
 Et voici qu'un lutrin prêt à tout renverser  
 D'un séjour si chéri vient encor me chasser !  
 O toi, de mon repos compagne aimable et sombre,  
 A de si noirs forfaits prêteras-tu ton ombre ?  
 Ah ! Nuit, si tant de fois dans les bras de l'amour,  
 Je t'admis au plaisir que je cachais au jour,  
 Du moins ne permets pas . . . ' La Mollesse oppressée  
 Dans sa bouche à ce mot sent sa langue glacée,  
 Et, lasse de parler, succombant sous l'effort,  
 Soupire, étend les bras, ferme l'œil, et s'endort.” *Le Lutrin*, Canto ii.

<sup>1</sup> Pope, in *An Essay on Criticism*, gives a rather odd reason why classical criticism does not flourish in England.

“ . . . Critic learning flourished most in France ;  
 The rules, a nation born to serve, obeys ;  
 And Boileau still in right of Horace sways.

## § 2. RACINE.

The genius of Jean Racine<sup>1</sup> was no doubt of a far higher order than Boileau's, but his worldly career had much in common with that of the great satirist and critic. If I had been guided simply by considerations of talent, rather than by those of convenience and literary significance, it might have been necessary to speak of Racine in connection with his fellow-dramatists Corneille and Molière, with the former of whom he directly challenges comparison, and united with whom he constitutes a dramatic triumvirate such as the world has never seen eclipsed. But the intimate friendship of Boileau and Racine was more than ordinarily significant; it sanctions their juxtaposition in the pages of a literary chronicle, being, indeed, only the outward demonstration of their sympathy of taste and judgment, and of the influence which they exerted upon each other. In worldly matters, in versatility and fertility of expression, Boileau was the strongest talent of the two; and if his aims and ambitions were rendered more lofty by the friendship which he so constantly cherished, he certainly nerved and supported Racine in his efforts to secure the recognition of the public. Thus the two master-pieces of Racine's tragic muse, *Phèdre* and *Athalie*, were both received with misgiving—the first especially by the more courtly part of the audience, the latter especially by the bulk of Parisian playgoers; but in both he had the warm advocacy and openly expressed admiration of Boileau,

But we, brave Britons, foreign laws despised,  
And kept unconquer'd, and uncivilised;  
Fierce for the liberties of wit, and bold  
We still defied the Romans, as of old."

<sup>1</sup> 1639-1699.

who was his best and most judicious friend, though a few years his junior. When the dramatist gave too great play to the natural incisiveness, if not bitterness, of his satirical mood, it was Boileau who tempered and restrained him. When Racine, enthusiastic for the stage, entered upon a war of words in defence of the drama against his friends and teachers at Port-Royal—the venerable Nicole being his principal antagonist—it was Boileau who reminded him that it was hardly becoming to expose his teachers to public ridicule, Boileau who induced him to do greater justice to his own heart, and to bear less hardly upon those who differed from him. And when Racine, disgusted and hurt by the inconsiderate harshness of the selfish Louis XIV., retired altogether from the life of the court, it was Boileau who remained his best and constant friend. Who can say how much of sympathy for his life-long companion mingled in the feeling which made Boileau resolve, upon the death of Racine, that he would go no more to Versailles, inasmuch as “he could praise no longer”?

Racine was the son of a controller of a salt office at Ferté-Milon, an important post, and one which became gradually more and more important and onerous up to the date of the Revolution. He resembled Corneille in the possession of a devotional and idealistic turn of mind, and his earlier years were given to the study of theology, and to the exercise of religion. He was a friend of the Arnaulds, and for some time a pupil of the community of Port-Royal. When he resolved to pursue a more secular and literary career, he did not throw off the graver inclinations and tendencies which gave solidity to his character, but—again like Corneille—he has left abundant proof that the ascendancy of religion was maintained in his heart to the last. Besides his dramas founded upon the sacred narratives, he published a series of *Cantiques Spirituels*. Con-



templative and retiring by disposition, he was a warm lover of nature, preferring the peace and quietness of moral scenes to the bustle and excitement of town. La Fontaine,<sup>1</sup> speaking of the *réunions* held in Boileau's house in the *Rue du Vieux-Colombier*, says on one occasion "Acante (Racine) proposed a walk somewhere out of town, at a considerable distance, and where there were few people. . . . He greatly loved gardens, flowers, shady places. Polyphile (La Fontaine) resembled him in this ; but one may say that the latter loved everything. These feelings, which filled their hearts with a certain tenderness, extended to their writings, and constituted their chief characteristic." It is perhaps more distinctly the case with the works of La Fontaine than with those of Racine ; but we need not conclude on that account that La Fontaine's love of the beauties of nature was stronger than Racine's.

The first drama by which the poet challenged the appreciation of his fellow-countrymen was the *Thébaïde*, published in his twenty-fifth year, in which the rivalry of the two brothers Eteocles and Polynices is described. In this play the brothers are killed, their mother Jocaste, their two cousins Hemon and Ménécée are dead, and the male survivor Créon, the traitor, offers his hand to the sole female surviving personage, Antigone, his niece. The latter refuses, and Créon, after a terrific monologue, says that "he is going to seek some rest in the infernal regions." This tragedy has scarcely any merit, except for some verses which are palpably imitated from Corneille. It was succeeded by *Alexandré*, another tragedy elegantly written, which was very successful, although it was also distinctly modelled after one of Corneille's. This play wants action. Porus, king of India, is already conquered in the third act, and remains arguing until the end of the fifth act with Alexander, who behaves mag-

<sup>1</sup> *Les Amours de Psyché et de Cupidon*, bk. i.

nanimously, and replaces Porus on the throne. This conduct is the more to be admired because the king of India says that his "name can raise up new enemies, and awaken a hundred kings, asleep in their chains." Hephæstion, the favourite of Alexander, acts like one of the most elegant courtiers of Louis XIV. ; and in his discourse with Cléofile, the sister of Taxile, an Indian king, rival to Porus, he states that he is "the faithful confidant of the beautiful flame" of his master, and declares that Alexander, "conqueror of so many princes," has only fought them to draw nearer to her, but still afraid not to be master of her heart. *Andromaque*, which was Racine's next tragedy, gave ample evidence of the groove in which his dramatic genius was going to run. He had borrowed the idea from Euripides, and from some verses in the third book of the *Æneid*, which tell how Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, and a son of Achilles, fell in love with Andromache, the widow of Hector, whom he abandons at last to marry Hermione, beloved by Orestes. In the French play Pyrrhus, on the point of marrying Andromache, is murdered by Orestes. When the assassin presents himself before Hermione, who had instigated him to revenge her, she turns away with horror from the guilty man, who is destroyed by the avenging furies. Pyrrhus is moreover the guardian of Astyanax, the youthful son of Hector, and in order to obtain the hand of the mother he threatens to deliver up the boy to the Greeks, who had sent Orestes for that very purpose. This play is undoubtedly very dramatic, and deserves all the success it obtained. Pyrrhus, with his alternations of rage and love, one moment menacing Andromache, and the next moment telling her "that he will punish the Greeks for her sufferings and his," and that "in less time than the Greeks have taken to destroy Troy, he can raise it up, and crown her son on its walls," is indeed the passionate son of the impetuous Achilles. Orestes appears

"melancholy mad," and pre-ordained to suffer; a mild Hamlet let loose at the court of Louis XIV., who argues as follows with his friend Pylades :

" My innocence at last begins to weigh me down.  
I do not know what unjust power at all times  
Leaves crime at peace and pursues innocence.  
From whatever side I consider myself,  
I see nothing but misfortunes which the gods condemn.  
Let us deserve their anger, let us justify their hatred,  
And let the fruit of the crime precede the punishment."<sup>1</sup>

He intends to carry off Hermione, and proposes to Pylades to abandon him; the latter does not argue, but, like a true friend, simply says, "Come on, my lord, let us carry off Hermione;" Orestes proves that he deserves such an affection by accepting his offer and by asking his friend to forgive "an unfortunate man who loses all that he loves, whom everybody hates and who hates himself." Hermione, stirred now by affection, now by detestation for Pyrrhus, is a remarkable creation. Her intense hatred is only equalled by her passionate love. She at one moment declares that Pyrrhus is "charming, faithful in fact, nothing is wanting to his glory," and at another time rages and says, "What pleasure would it be to me to avenge myself my injury, to draw back my arm, stained with the blood of the perfidious wretch! . . . my vengeance is in vain, if he ignores, whilst dying, that it is I who kill him." Her reproaches to the youthful monarch of Epirus are natural; and when she tells

<sup>1</sup> "Mon innocence enfin commence à me peser.  
Je ne sais, de tout temps, quelle injuste puissance  
Laisse le crime en paix et poursuit l'innocence.  
De quelque part sur moi que je tourne les yeux,  
Je ne vois que malheurs que condamnent les dieux.  
Méritons leur courroux, justifions leur haine,  
Et que le fruit du crime en précède la peine."

him that he does not listen to her, that he is anxious to be with Andromache, when she says : " You count the moments which you lose with me ;" when she speaks of Pyrrhus' beloved, as " that Trojan woman," we feel that the character of the jealous princess is true and taken from the life. And when Orestes, having murdered Pyrrhus, presents himself before her to claim his reward, she forgets that she has induced him to commit so vile a crime, and shrieks out in her passion,

" Speak, who has made you the arbiter of his fate ?

Why did you murder him ? What has he done to you, why did you do so ?

Who told you to do it ?"

Andromache is a true mother, who sacrifices everything, her pride, her delicacy, and at last herself, for her son, " an unfortunate child who does not yet know that Pyrrhus is his master, and that he is the son of Hector." She humbles herself before her rival Hermione, she implores Pyrrhus, and tries to move his pity and generosity in heart-stirring language ; and when at last she finds that everything is in vain, she resolves to marry him, and then to stab herself ; and begs her confidante to " speak to her son every day of the virtues of his father ;" and then utters the touching words, " and sometimes also speak to him of his mother."

To my mind *Andromaque*, in spite of its faults, and it has many,<sup>1</sup> is the most living, the most Shakspearian of all Racine's tragedies. Others are more perfect in diction, have a more interesting plot, a more elegant versification, but in

<sup>1</sup> For example such conceits as :

Brûlé de plus de feux que je n'en allumai,

or

Prenez une victime

Que les Scythes auraient dérobée à vos coups,

Si j'en avais trouvé d'aussi cruels que vous.



this play I imagine I can see the soul breathing under the mask of the stage-personages, and can hear passion vibrating in the very lines they speak. Was Racine at the time of his writing this play in love with Madame Duparc, who, when *Andromaque* was acted (1667), was thirty-four years old, and had been three years a widow? She was very handsome,<sup>1</sup> and Racine was only twenty-eight years old.<sup>2</sup> He induced her to leave his friend Molière's troupe, to go and play the heroine of his tragedy at the hôtel de Bourgogne—which was the cause of his quarrel with Molière. Did he feel these pangs of jealousy, that agony of disappointment, that alternation of love and aversion of which Pyrrhus and Hermione are the embodiments? An author ought not always to be identified with his creations, and—to speak only of the characters of *Andromaque*—Racine can never have felt the maternal sentiments of Andromache, but I am yet of opinion that it is in this play that Racine, most likely, emitted the expression of his innermost personal feelings.

Racine followed next the precedent of Corneille, and tempted the comic muse, by publishing, in 1668, an excellent farce, *Les Plaideurs*, after the manner of Aristophanes, dealing with the mania of an old judge, Dandin, for pronouncing sentence, as well as with the fondness of the Countess de Pimbesche and Chicaneau for law and lawsuits. The

<sup>1</sup> Robinet speaks of her "queenly bearing" in his *Lettre poétique* of Dec. 15th, 1668, the year of her death.

<sup>2</sup> In Clement, *La Police sous Louis XIV.*, p. 178, I find some confirmation of my supposition. The infamous poisoner La Voisin declared "that she had known Mademoiselle Duparc, the female comedian, that she had visited her during fourteen years, and that her stepmother, named de Gordo (de Gorle) had told her that it was Racine who had poisoned her." I do not intend to insinuate that this accusation was true, but simply to suggest that the intimacy between Racine and Mademoiselle Duparc was of common notoriety, otherwise such a wretch as La Voisin would not have thought of bringing a similar accusation.

opening speech of Petit-Jean, the servant of the judge, will exemplify the skill of the poet in his lighter mood, wherein he may be compared, not altogether unfavourably, with his contemporary Molière :

“ Upon my word ! the man who trusts in the future is very mad :

He who laughs on Friday shall weep on Sunday.  
Last year a judge took me into his service ;  
He had had me up from Amiens to make a Swiss of me.  
All these Normans were pleased to divert themselves with us ;  
But they say you must do at Rome as they do at Rome.  
Although I am a Picard I am a very good fellow,  
And I made a noise just like the rest.  
All the biggest gentlemen spoke to me with their hats off :  
And called me at every word ‘ Monsieur de Petit-Jean ! ’  
But without money honour is but a distemper.  
Upon my word ! I was a mere stage door-keeper :  
It was no use to knock and take off their hats to me ;  
They didn’t get into our house without paying.  
No money no entrance ; and my door was shut.  
It is true that I gave some of it to my master :  
We made up our accounts sometimes ; it was my charge  
To keep the house in candles and in hay ;  
But I lost nothing by it. At any rate  
I would have kept the house in straw to boot.  
’Tis a pity ! his heart was too much in his business :  
Every day he was the first and last on the bench,  
And often all by himself ; if he was to be believed  
He would have slept there without bite or sup.  
I sometimes said to him : ‘ Monsieur Perrin Dandin,  
Really, you rise every day too early in the morning ;  
He who wants to travel far is careful of his steed :  
Eat, drink, sleep, and let us not spend all in a day ! ’  
He heeded me not. He has kept awake so long,  
And done so much, that they say his wits are gone wool-  
gathering.  
He wants to judge us all one after the other ;

He is ever muttering some gibberish  
 Of which I don't understand a word. He insists, nolens  
     volens,  
 On sleeping in his gown and square cap.  
 He had his cock's head cut off, in a rage,  
 For having woke him later than usual :  
 He said that a litigant, whose cause was going wrong,  
 Had given a bribe to that poor animal.  
 After this pretty sentence, the poor man may do what he will,  
 His son will let no one speak to him about business ;  
 He makes us watch him day and night, and closely too ;  
 Else it would be no use, and my master would be at his  
     cases.

Heaven knows if he is quick to escape from us.  
 As for me, I sleep no more : so I am growing thin ;  
 It is a pity. I stretch myself, and do nothing but yawn,  
 But, let who will keep awake, here is my pillow.  
 On my word ! I must give myself a treat this night ;  
 You wrong nobody by sleeping in the street.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This speech in the original is full of idioms and proverbs.

“ Ma foi ! sur l'avenir bien fou qui se fiera :  
 Tel qui rit vendredi, dimanche pleurera.  
 Un juge, l'an passé, me prit a son service ;  
 Il m'avait fait venir d'Amiens pour être suisse.  
 Tous ces Normands voulaient se divertir de nous ;  
 On apprend à hurler, dit l'autre, avec les loups.  
 Tout Picard que j'étais, j'étais un bon apôtre,  
 Et je faisais claquer mon fouet tout comme un autre.  
 Tous les plus gros monsieurs me parlaient chapeau bas :  
 Monsieur de Petit Jean, ah ! gros comme le bras.  
 Mais sans argent l'honneur n'est qu'une maladie.  
 Ma foi ! j'étais un franc portier de comédie :  
 On avait beau heurter et m'ôter son chapeau ;  
 On n'entrait point chez nous sans graisser le marteau.  
 Point d'argent, point de suisse ; et ma porte était close.  
 Il est vrai qu'à monsieur j'en rendais quelque chose :  
 Nous comptions quelquefois ; on me donnait le soin  
 De fournir la maison de chandelle et de foin ;  
 Mais je n'y perdais rien. Enfin, vaille que vaille,  
 J'aurais sur le marché fort bien fourni la paille.  
 C'est dommage ! il avait le cœur trop au métier :  
 Tous les jours, le premier aux plaids, et le dernier,



In Racine's next tragedy, *Britannicus* (1669), the rivalry between Nero and Britannicus for the love of Junia are faithfully and poetically delineated, and Agrippina, Burrhus, and Narcissus are described, as Tacitus has depicted them; the two latter representing virtue and vice struggling to obtain possession of the mind of the youthful emperor, and the freedman finally triumphing and poisoning Britannicus by command of Nero. Listen for a moment to the advice Narcissus gives to Nero, who is still hesitating, and acknowledges that he is afraid that Rome shall call him a poisoner and parricide :—

“For a long time the Romans are accustomed to the yoke ;  
They worship the hand that holds them enchained.  
You shall always see them eager to please you :  
Their apt slavishness has disgusted Tiberius.

Et bien souvent tout seul ; si l'on l'eût voulu croire  
Il s'y serait couché sans manger et sans boire.  
Je lui disais parfois : ‘ Monsieur Perrin Dandin,  
Tout franc, vous vous levez, tous le jours trop matin.  
Qui veut voyager loin ménage sa monture :  
Buvez, mangez, dormez, et faisons feu qui dure.’  
Il n'en a tenu compte. Il a si bien veillé  
Et si bien fait, qu'on dit que son timbre est brouillé  
Il nous veut tous juger les uns après les autres ;  
Il marmotte toujours certaines patenôtres  
Où je ne comprends rien. Il veut, bon gré mal gré.  
Ne se coucher qu'en robe et qu'en bonnet carré.  
Il fit couper la tête à son coq, de colère,  
Pour l'avoir éveillé plus tard qu' à l'ordinaire :  
Il disait qu'un plaideur dont l'affaire allait mal  
Avait graissé la patte à ce pauvre animal.  
Depuis ce bel arrêt, le pauvre homme a beau faire,  
Son fils ne souffre plus qu'on lui parle d'affaire.  
Il nous le fait garder jour et nuit, et de près :  
Autrement, serviteur, et mon homme est aux plaids.  
Pour s'échapper de nous, Dieu sait s'il est allégre.  
Pour moi, je ne dors plus : aussi je deviens maigre,  
C'est pitié ! Je m'entends, et ne fais que bâiller.  
Mais, veille qui voudra, voici mon oreiller.  
Ma foi ! pour cette nuit il faut que je m'en donne ;  
Pour dormir dans la rue on n'offense personne.”



I myself, clothed in a borrowed rank,  
 Which Claudius gave me when he freed me,  
 A hundred times, during my past career, I have seen  
 Their patience tried, but not wearied.  
 You fear the black stain of a poisoning ?  
 Slay the brother, abandon the sister,  
 And Rome, lavishing victims on the altars  
 Even if they were innocent, will discover their crimes,  
 And you'll hear them call these days ill omen'd  
 On which the sister and brother were born."<sup>1</sup>

This is beautiful ; what is less so, is that Racine, probably stung by the comparative small success of this play, published it with a preface—which, however, he afterwards suppressed—in which he distinctly attacked Corneille, and says that to please the public he ought to have brought on the stage “an intoxicated hero who wantonly wishes his mistress to hate him, a Lacedemonian, a fine talker, a conqueror who only speaks of love, and a woman who gives lessons of pride to conquerors.” He farther says that Terence mentions “an aged malevolent poet who came even to intrigue and to recruit votes against him, up to the very hour when they represented his comedies.”<sup>2</sup> It has also

<sup>1</sup> “ Au joug depuis longtemps ils se sont façonnés  
 Ils adorent la main qui les tient enchaînés.  
 Vous les verrez toujours ardents à vous complaire :  
 Leur prompte servitude a fatigué Tibère.  
 Moi-même, revêtu d'un pouvoir emprunté,  
 Que je reçus de Claude avec la liberté,  
 J'ai cent fois, dans le cours de ma gloire passée  
 Tenté leur patience, et ne l'ai point lassée.  
 D'un empoisonnement vous craignez la noirceur ?  
 Faites périr le frère, abandonnez la sœur,  
 Rome, sur les autels prodiguant les victimes,  
 Fussent ils innocents, leur trouvera des crimes.  
 Vous verrez mettre au rang des jours infortunés  
 Ceux où jadis la sœur et le frère sont nés.”

<sup>2</sup> Whom the “intoxicated hero” was meant for is not known—La Harpe says it was intended for Attila. The others are hints against Corneille's tragedies *La Mort de Pompée*, *Sertorius*, and *Agésilas*.

been stated that a hint of Racine about Nero "making a spectacle of himself before the Romans," prevented Louis XIV. from dancing afterwards in *ballets*; but this is a mistake, for *Britannicus* was first acted in 1669, and the *Grand Monarque* made his last appearance as a dancer on the stage at Versailles in the *Divertissement Royal*, given in the year 1670.

*Bérénice* (1670) which was undertaken at the suggestion of Henrietta of England, in rivalry with Corneille, depicts the struggle of Titus to sacrifice his ambition to his love for Bérénice, and his secret rivalry with Antiochus. This piece was a great success, and had forty representations; a very considerable number for those days. In spite of its elegant versification, this tragedy is rather lackadaisical and affected; there are very few natural sayings placed in the mouth of the different personages, and the grandiloquent style often mars what might have been said more simply and effectually. The ending is peculiar, for neither the one nor the other of the princes obtains the hand of the heroine, who calmly says, "let us three serve as an example to the universe, of the most tender and unfortunate love, of which it can remember the painful history." In this play there is a curious coincidence—if it be one. When Titus informs Bérénice that it is against the laws and the will of the Roman people that he should marry her, Bérénice replies, "My lord, you are an emperor, and you shed tears." Tradition affirms that Maria de Mancini, a niece of the Cardinal Mazarin, applied almost the same words to the youthful Louis XIV., who was in love with her, and obliged to bid her an eternal farewell.

*Bajazet*, represented two years later, suffers from the same fault as *Bérénice*. The Sultan Amurat, on leaving Constantinople to attack Babylon, placed in the hands of the favourite

sultana, Roxane, an order to put to death his brother Bajazet, whom he mistrusts, if the latter gave the least cause for suspicion. The favourite falls in love with Bajazet,—who is himself enamoured of Atalide,—and intends to place him on his brother's throne. But when Roxane discovers Bajazet's passion, she resolves to have him strangled, or, to use Racine's expression, "she gave up his life to the fatal knot." She herself is stabbed by Orcan, the faithful servant of Amurat, "born under the burning sky of the darkest Africans," whilst Atalide, receiving the tidings of her lover's death, plunges a dagger in her own breast. The amount of slaughter in this tragedy is sufficiently Turkish; the personages are scarcely so, and the fine-drawn disputations and arguments about love smack strongly of the court of Louis XIV.; yet the vizir Acomat, who wishes Bajazet to ascend the throne, expresses himself generally like a real Asiatic. He says to his confidant, Osmin,

"You know the usual severity of our sultans;  
One brother seldom allows his brothers to enjoy  
The dangerous honour of being descended from a race  
Which brings them far too near to his rank."

Would one not think these lines were written at the present day? And so seem to me the following, spoken by the same:

"A vizir is always an object of suspicion to the sultans;  
Hardly have they chosen him when they fear their work;  
His spoils are a property they wish to gather,  
And their sorrows never allow us to grow old."

One year after *Bajazet* was represented *Mithridate*, of which the subject is nearly the same as that of Molière's *Miser*, an aged father, the rival of his son; but whilst the comic dramatist only excites our risible faculties, Racine succeeds in making us shed tears. The way in which



the fathers discover the affection of their sons for the object of their love, by pretending to allow the young people to become united, is also the same in both plays. I think that our dramatist has scarcely written anything grander than the speech of Mithridates,<sup>1</sup> in which he expounds his policy to his sons; and when at last the aged king is brought, fatally wounded, upon the stage, and Monime tells him to "live in order to triumph over a conquered enemy, and to avenge himself," his answer given with his dying breath, is "It is done, madam, and I have lived." *Iphigénie en Aulide* shows again a rivalry, but this time between Eriphile and Iphigenia, who both love Achilles. The noble resignation of Iphigenia, who is going to be sacrificed, and is finally spared, as well as the manner in which her mother Clytemnestra endeavours to save her life,<sup>2</sup> is well described; Agamemnon and Ulysses are decidedly less so, and their language is often inflated. Of the character of this drama let a single passage bear witness, a passage which in itself will fairly illustrate the tragic style of Racine. It is the expression of the daughter's resignation at the will of her father, even when that will decrees her death:

"Father,  
Trouble yourself no more, you are not betrayed;  
When you command, you shall be obeyed.  
My life is your gift; you wish to take it again;  
Your orders could be understood quite plainly.  
With the same look of content, the same submissive heart  
Wherewith I accepted the husband you promised me,  
I shall know, if it must be, like an obedient victim,  
How to offer my innocent head to the knife of Calchas;  
And respecting the blow which you have ordered,  
Give back to you all the blood which you have given me.  
Yet if this respect, this obedience,  
Seem in your eyes worthy of another recompense,  
If you pity the grief of a weeping mother,

<sup>1</sup> Act iii. scene 1.<sup>2</sup> Act iv. scene 4.



I dare to say that, seeing my present condition,  
 Perchance sufficient honours surrounded my life,  
 For me not to wish it to be snatched away from me,  
 Nor that a stern fate, in depriving me of it,  
 Should have assigned its end so close to my birth.  
 Daughter of Agamemnon, I am the first, my lord,  
 Who called you by the sweet name of father ;  
 It was I who, so long the delight of your eyes,  
 Have made you thank the Gods for that name,  
 And for whom, so often lavishing your caresses,  
 You have not scorned to show the weaknesses of a father.  
 Alas ! I took delight in listening to the roll  
 Of the names of the countries which you were going to subdue ;  
 And already, foreseeing the conquest of Ilion,  
 I was anticipating the rejoicings for so grand a triumph.  
 I did not expect that, in order to begin it,  
 My blood would be the first which you should shed."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> " Mon père,

Cessez de vous troubler, vous n'êtes point trahi :  
 Quand vous commanderez, vous serez obéi.  
 Ma vie est votre bien, vous voulez le reprendre ;  
 Vos ordres sans détour pouvaient se faire entendre.  
 D'un œil aussi content, d'un cœur aussi soumis,  
 Que j'acceptais l'époux que vous m'aviez promis,  
 Je saurai, s'il le faut, victime obéissante,  
 Tendre au fer de Calchas une tête innocente ;  
 Et respectant le coup par vous-même ordonné,  
 Vous rendre tout le sang que vous m'avez donné.  
 Si pourtant ce respect, si cette obéissance  
 Paraît digne à vos yeux d'une autre récompense ;  
 Si d'une mère en pleurs vous plaignez les ennuis,  
 J'ose vous dire ici qu'en l'état où je suis  
 Peut-être assez d'honneurs environnaient ma vie,  
 Pour ne pas souhaiter qu'elle me fût ravie,  
 Ni qu'en me l'arrachant, un sévère destin,  
 Si près de ma naissance, en eût marqué la fin.  
 Fille d'Agamemnon, c'est moi qui, la première,  
 Seigneur, vous appelai de ce doux nom de père ;  
 C'est moi qui, si longtemps le plaisir de vos yeux,  
 Vous ai fait de ce nom remercier les dieux,  
 Et pour qui, tant de fois prodiguant vos caresses,  
 Vous n'avez point du sang dédaigné les faiblesses.  
 Hélas ! avec plaisir je me faisais conter

*Phèdre* was brought out in 1677. It turns upon the passion of Phædra, the wife of Theseus, king of Athens, for her stepson Hippolytus, who, in his turn, loves Aricia. The heroine of the tragedy thinks her husband dead, and when Hippolytus presents himself to condole with her, she betrays her passion, and says that she still loves Theseus, "not such as the infernal regions have seen him . . . but charming, young, carrying all hearts with him . . . such as I see you. He had your gait, your eyes, your manner of speech;" and when her stepson, horror struck, reminds her that Theseus is his father and her husband, her passion overleaps all bounds, and betrays itself, whilst recognising its ignominy. Theseus suddenly comes back, Phædra has been told that Hippolytus loves another, and her confidante Oenone informs the king that his son burns with a criminal love for his stepmother. Theseus thereupon invokes Neptune to avenge him, and when afterwards the youthful prince is driving on the seashore, a terrible monster, arising from the waves, frightens the horses, which run away, and kill Hippolytus. Oenone utters a truism,<sup>1</sup> and drowns herself; and Phædra takes poison, after having made a confession of her crime.<sup>2</sup> There are

Tous les noms des pays que vous alliez dompter ;  
Et déjà, d'Ilion présageant la conquête,  
D'un triomphe si beau je préparais la fête.  
Je ne m'attendais pas que, pour le commencer,  
Mon sang fut le premier que vous dussiez verser."

<sup>1</sup> "Ah dieux ! pour la servir j'ai tout fait, tout quitté :

Et j'en reçois ce prix ! je l'ai bien mérité."—*Act iv. sc. 6.*

<sup>2</sup> Dryden, in his preface to *All for Love*, says : The French tragedy "heroes are the most civil people breathing ; but their good breeding seldom extends to a word of sense ; all their wit is in their ceremony ; they want the genius which animates our stage . . . Thus, their Hippolitus is so scrupulous in point of decency, that he will rather expose himself to death than accuse his stepmother to his father . . . But take Hippolitus out of his poetic fit, and I suppose he would think it a wiser part to set the saddle on the right horse, and choose rather to live with the reputation of a plain-spoken honest man, than to die with the infamy of an incestuous villain . . . The poet . . . has . . . transformed the Hippolitus of Euripides into Monsieur Hippolyte."



magnificent passages in this tragedy, and the character of Phædra is grandly drawn, but Aricia, Theseus, Hippolytus, and his tutor Theramenes are very feebly sketched; and the speech of the latter describing his pupil's death, though written in fine language, is quite out of place, far too long, and decidedly monotonous. This play was not received as well as Racine thought it deserved to be. This was in part owing to a cabal formed against it by the Duke de Nevers and his clique, who patronised some poetasters—amongst whom Pradon alone need be instanced by name—who pretended to a ridiculous rivalry with the dramatist, and whose works have all but perished from the literary annals of their country. The wound to Racine's susceptibility may have contributed to increase the desire for retirement which he had long felt. From this time, and for no less than twelve years, he withdrew from the stage. He wished to become a Carthusian friar, but gave way to the advice of his friends, and married the daughter of a *trésorier-général* of Amiens, a quiet and pious woman. Shortly after his marriage he was appointed, in conjunction with Boileau, historiographer to the king. He also, through the mediation of Boileau, became reconciled to d'Arnauld and the Port-Royalists, and wrote even later<sup>1</sup> an *Abstract of the History of Port-Royal*. Then his court career began. He went with the king to the siege of Namur, and had often the honour of reading to him. He also edited the works of a child seven years old, the Duke de Maine, the bastard of Louis XIV. and Madame de Montespan, and sketched, at the request of the court, the plan of an opera, *The Fall of Phaëthon*. Yet he was very strict at home with his young family, and on the whole led a peaceful life. The fruits of this calm, of this long silence and abstention, were reaped in 1689 by the publication of *Esther*, a tragedy taken from the Bible, modified according to the taste of the

<sup>1</sup> In 1698.

court, and which was played by the female pupils of the school of Saint-Cyr. The male characters—according to Racine's preface—"were represented by the young ladies, with all the decorum of their sex, which was the easier for them, as in ancient times the Persians and the Jews wore long dresses which reached to the ground;" a remark which smacks strongly of the prudery then infecting Louis XIV.'s court. The king and Madame de Maintenon showed their warmest admiration for this biblical tragedy, and, of course, the rest of the court followed.<sup>1</sup> This admiration was increased by the allusions with which Racine, intentionally or not—and to my mind they were intentional—had strewn his piece. Esther, who was descended from the race proscribed by Haman, was Madame de Maintenon, the grand-daughter of d'Aubigné, whom the king had married in 1684; the haughty Vashti was Madame de Montespan; and the king was, of course, Ahasuerus. The audience were naturally delighted when they heard Esther say, "In a place far removed from profane eyes, all my study and all my care is to form these maidens of Sion; there fleeing from the pride of a diadem, tired of vain honours, and studying myself, I abase myself at the feet of the Eternal, and enjoy the pleasure of being no longer remembered;"<sup>2</sup> or again, when she spoke "of the famous disgrace of the haughty Vashti, whose place I occupy, when the king, enraged with her, drove her from his throne as well as from his bed."<sup>3</sup> How it must have pleased Louis XIV. to hear "I have never looked except with fear upon the august majesty impressed upon his brow!" That Louvois, however, should be sketched under the

<sup>1</sup> Madame de Sévigné says in one of her letters (512), "The king and all the court are delighted with Esther. M. Le Prince (de Condé) shed tears; Madame de Maintenon, and eight Jesuits, amongst whom was father Gaillard, honoured with their presence the last representation."

<sup>2</sup> *Esther*, Act i. scene 1. Of course "the maidens of Sion" were the young ladies brought up at Saint-Cyr.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Act i. scene 1.



name of Haman appears to me exceedingly improbable, for Racine would not have dared to place in his mouth such words as these, "the king knows that he owes me everything, and that, for the sake of his grandeur, I trampled under foot remorse, fear, bashfulness ; that with a heart of stone exerting his authority, I silenced the laws and tortured innocence ; that for his sake, braving the dislike of the Persians, I have cherished, I have sought for their curses ;"<sup>1</sup> nor make any allusion to the revocation of the edict of Nantes, as some critics of the present age have thought. It was not in our dramatist's nature to be so daring ; but that the application of these lines was made is not astonishing. The local colouring has in nowise been preserved ; the versification is masterly ; the choruses are perhaps the most perfect ever written in French, except those of *Athalie*, and Esther is sometimes touching, and always interesting.<sup>2</sup>

*Athalie* is based upon the eleventh chapter of the second book of Kings ; and it is rather characteristic of the age of Louis XIV. and of the public for whom it was written, that Racine thought it necessary to give a *résumé* of that chapter in the preface of his tragedy. It was only acted before the king and a very select company by the young ladies of the school of Saint-Cyr, and without any theatrical dresses or scenery, and proved a failure, or at least far from a success. And this cannot be wondered at when we recollect that the utterances of a righteous and just God, as represented in *Athalie*, must have jarred on the ears of the selfish and bigoted Louis XIV., and that such phrases as "the happiness of the wicked passes

<sup>1</sup> *Esther*, Act iii. scene 1.

<sup>2</sup> In some satirical couplets which were written about that time, and which were circulated *sub rosa*, we find Racine called "Hypocrite rimeur, historien trop payé." Of Madame de Maintenon it is said :

"Comme la juive d'autrefois  
Cette Esther qui tient à nos rois,  
Eprouva d'heureuses misères

Mais plus dure que l'autre Esther  
Pour chasser la foi de ses pères,  
Elle prend la flamme et le c."

away like a torrent ;"<sup>1</sup> and such words as the following, addressed by the high priest to the youthful king Joash, must have appeared offensive to the *Grand Monarque* :—

“ You are ignorant of the intoxication of absolute power,  
And of the bewitching voice of cowardly flatterers ;  
Soon they'll tell you that the holiest laws  
Rule the vile people, but obey kings ;  
That a king has no other restraint but his own will ;  
That he ought to sacrifice everything to his supreme grandeur ;  
That the people is condemned to tears, to labour,  
And must be governed with a rod of iron ;  
That unless it is oppressed, it will oppress sooner or later.”<sup>2</sup>

This language was unseasonable in 1691, when the people, through long suffering, began to murmur, and hence the court disapproved of this tragedy, and the general public followed like the sheep of Panurge. Racine himself thought that he had made a mistake, but Boileau told him that justice would be done to it sooner or later. And justice has been done to it ; and, singular to say, the first who did so was the Regent d'Orleans, who in 1716 ordered this tragedy to be played. From that time up to the present it has been generally considered as the masterpiece of Racine, and most literary men agree with this opinion. I have already said that I considered *Andromaque* the play of Racine in which to my mind the upheaving of personal passions and feelings is perceptible ; but *Athalie* was written when the author was more

<sup>1</sup> Le bonheur des méchants comme un torrent s'écoule.—*Athalie*, ii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> “ De l'absolu pouvoir vous ignorez l'ivresse,  
Et des lâches flatteurs la voix enchanteresse,  
Bientôt ils vous diront que les plus saintes lois  
Maîtresses du vil peuple, obéissent aux rois ;  
Qu'un roi n'a d'autre frein que sa volonté même ;  
Qu'il doit immoler tout à sa grandeur suprême ;  
Qu'aux larmes, au travail, le peuple est condamné,  
Et d'un sceptre de fer veut être gouverné ;  
Que, s'il n'est opprimé, tôt ou tard il opprime.”  
*Athalie*, iv. 3.



than fifty years old, and overflowing with religious sentiments ; when he had studied his Bible and renewed his intimacy with the Port-Royalists. It is perfect in versification, finished in character-sketches, well conceived, marvellously executed, and enriched with such choruses, that though we miss the sensuous passion of his first successful play, the religious feeling so percolates the whole, without becoming obtrusive or overpowering, that I have no hesitation in calling it the most perfect of all French scriptural tragedies. It is, I imagine, also the only French tragedy, which is full of bustle and action. It does not play in a portico or in a palace, but in the Jewish Temple, crowded with Levites and priests, all anxious to show their zeal for their God. To give an adequate idea of its beauties I should have to quote nearly the whole. I shall give a single extract, not to show the nearly biblical grandeur of some of the speeches, but a part of the scene where Athaliah meets Joash in the temple, in the presence of Abner and Jehosheba, and interrogates him ; and this in order to prove how easily Racine could write in a natural tone of conversation, in spite of the difficulty of the metre.

*Athaliah (to Joash).* What is every day your occupation ?

*Joash.* I worship the Lord ; they explain his law to me ;  
They teach me to read in his divine book ;  
And already I begin to write it with my own hand.

*Athaliah.* What does this law tell you ?

*Joash.* That God wishes to be loved ;  
That he avenges, sooner or later, his holy name  
blasphemed,  
That he is the defender of the timid orphan ;  
That he opposes the haughty and punishes the  
homicide.

*Athaliah.* I understand ; but what is the occupation  
Of all who are assembled in this place ?

*Joash.* They praise and they bless God.

*Athaliah.* Does God will that they should always pray, and contemplate him ?

*Joash.* Every profane exercise is banished from his temple.

*Athaliah.* What then are your pleasures ?

*Joash.* Sometimes at the altar

I present to the high priest the incense or the salt ;

I hear the infinite praises of God sung ;

I see the magnificent order of his ceremonies.

*Athaliah.* What ! You have no more agreeable pastime ?

I pity the sad fate of a child like you,

Come into my palace and behold my glory.

*Joash.* I ! I should lose the remembrance of God's kindnesses !

*Athaliah.* No ! I do not wish to constrain you to forget him.

*Joash.* You do not pray to him.

*Athaliah.* You can pray to him.

*Joash.* I should, however, see another deity invoked.

*Athaliah.* I have my God whom I serve ; you shall serve yours :  
They are two powerful gods.

*Joash.* Mine is to be feared.

He alone is God, madam ; and yours is nothing.

*Athaliah.* When with me many pleasures will present themselves.

*Joash.* The happiness of the wicked passes away like a torrent.

*Athaliah.* Who are these wicked ?

*Jehosheba.* Madam ! excuse

A child . . .

*Athaliah* (to *Jehosheba*). I love to see how you teach him.

In short, Eliacin, you have known how to please me ;

No doubt you are not an ordinary child.

You see I am a queen and have no heir :

Doff these clothes, abandon this vile office ;

I wish you to share in all my riches ;

Try this very day if I keep what I promise.

Seated at my table, everywhere at my side,

I intend to treat you as my own son.

*Joash.* As your son.

*Athaliah.* Yes. . . . You are silent !



*Joash.*

What a father

I should leave ! and for . . .

*Athaliah.* Well ?*Joash.* For what a mother ! <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Joas.* J'adore le Seigneur ; on m'explique sa loi ;  
 Dans son livre divin on m'apprend à la lire :  
 Et déjà de ma main je commence à l'écrire.

*Athalie.* Que vous dit cette loi ?

*Joas.* Que Dieu veut être aimé ;  
 Qu'il venge tôt ou tard son saint nom blasphémé,  
 Qu'il est le défenseur de l'orphelin timide ;  
 Qu'il résiste au superbe et punit l'homicide.

*Athalie.* J'entends. Mais tout ce peuple enfermé dans ce lieu,  
 A quoi s'occupe-t-il ?

*Joas.* Il loue, il bénit Dieu.*Athalie.* Dieu veut-il qu'à toute heure on prie, on le contemple ?*Joas.* Tout profane exercice est banni de son temple.*Athalie.* Quel sont donc vos plaisirs ?

*Joas.* Quelquefois à l'autel  
 Je présente au grand prêtre on l'encens ou le sel ;  
 J'entends chanter de Dieu les grandeurs infinies ;  
 Je vois l'ordre pompeux de ses cérémonies.

*Athalie.* Eh quoi ? vous n'avez point de passe-temps plus doux ?  
 Je plains le triste sort d'un enfant tel que vous.  
 Venez dans mon palais, vous y verrez ma gloire.

*Joas.* Moi ! des bienfaits de Dieu je perdrais la mémoire !*Athalie.* Non ! je ne vous veux pas contraindre à l'oublier.*Joas.* Vous ne le priez point.*Athalie.* Vous pourrez le prier.*Joas.* Je verrais cependant en invoquer un autre.

*Athalie.* J'ai mon dieu que je sers, vous servirez le vôtre :  
 Ce sont deux puissant dieux.

*Joas.* Il faut craindre le mien.

Lui seul est Dieu, madame ; et le vôtre n'est rien.

*Athalie.* Les plaisirs près de moi vous chercheront en foule.*Joas.* Le bonheur des méchants comme un torrent s'écoule.*Athalie.* Ces méchants, qui sont-ils ?*Josabeth.* Eh, madame ! excusez

Un enfant . . . .

*Athalie.* J'aime à voir comme vous l'instruisez.

Enfin, Éliacin, vous avez su me plaire ;  
 Vous n'êtes point sans doute un enfant ordinaire.  
 Vous voyez, je suis reine et n'ai point d'héritier :  
 Laissez là cet habit, quittez ce vil métier ;  
 Je veux vous faire part de toutes mes richesses ;  
 Essayez dès ce jour l'effet de mes promesses.

I do not know in the whole range of French tragedy in verse any dialogue in which the tone is so unconstrained; though I must admit that, to say the least of it, Joas is not polite.

The closing years of Racine's life were marked by comparatively slight productions, almost the only ones recorded being a few religious poems for the behoof of the community of Saint Cyr, and a memoir which he is said to have written at the instance of Madame de Maintenon, and which produced results ludicrously beyond what might have been expected from it. He had been conversing one day with Madame upon the miseries of the lower orders, and the necessity for a social reform; and the royal favourite asked him to put his ideas in writing. Racine did so; and Louis saw the document when he paid his next visit to his wife. The king, now grown old (1698) and obstinate, having on more than one occasion warmly refused to initiate a policy of reform, even on the advice of his wisest councillors, took offence at the poet's words. "Because he can make verses," he cried, "does he imagine that he knows everything? And because he is a great poet does he want to be a minister of state?" The petulant reproach was enough to crush the spirit of Racine, who could not bear that his gratitude should still be due to a monarch who had ceased to value him. His own son<sup>1</sup> informs us that the reproof broke his father's sensitive heart. This appears to be a mistake, for Racine did not die till a year later, and then of an abscess in the liver. More-

A ma table, partout à mes côtés assis,  
Je prétends vous traiter comme mon propre fils.

*Joas.* Comme votre fils?

*Athalie.* Oui . . . Vous vous taisez?

*Joas.* Quel père

Je quitterais! et pour . . .

*Athalie.* Eh bien?

*Joas.* Pour quelle mère!

<sup>1</sup> L. Racine, *Mémoires sur la vie de J. Racine.*

over, in his apologetic letter to Madame de Maintenon, written after his disgrace, not a word is said about the memoir, but Racine asks merely to be freed from his share in a tax laid upon the newly appointed councillors. What seems more likely is that Racine interceded in favour of the Port-Royalists, whose short history he had published that same year ; that Louis XIV. disapproved of his zeal, and told the poet so ; that the latter took this to heart, and brooded over it, that his chronic liver disease got worse, and that he died of it. At his death he expressed a desire to be buried at Port-Royal, which caused a courtier to observe that "Racine would not have shown so much daring if he had been alive." But in any case the *Grand Monarque's* frown had a share in his death, and it is a strange illustration of the remarkable personal influence exerted by Louis upon those to whom he had cared to show himself in his best light.

Racine's dramatic works fall naturally under three heads of classification—his comedy, his classical tragedies, and his scriptural tragedies. "We expect from such an age," a critic observes,<sup>1</sup> "as that which Racine adorned, neither the artless narration of the epic nor the enthusiastic outbursts of the ode. If there exists a kind of poetry which, to produce its effect, requires a full and brilliant assemblage of characters ; which in a well-constructed theatre so arranges the audience that they may come to be seen as well as to hear ; which sets forth in its elaboration, with seductive art, all the weaknesses of the heart, and knows how to excuse them, to ennoble them, ticketing them with heroic names ; which, in a word, presents a flattering mirror to a self-adoring society, no doubt this kind of poetry will be cultivated with success and received with rapture." This, in fact, was the art which earned for Racine his success upon the stage ; and in order to probe this success let us pass a rapid survey over the pieces which he

<sup>1</sup> Demogeot, *Histoire de la littérature française*, ch. 33, p. 405.



has produced, and of which a slight analysis has already been given. After one or two imitations, or at least over-narrow attempts in the style of the ancients, and of Euripides and Corneille in chief, the *Andromaque* exactly hit the mood of Parisian taste. The title and situation of Euripides, in his drama of the same name, are almost all that Racine has borrowed. He strengthens the circumstances of the plot by making them more natural, and heightens the passion by rendering it more concentrated, so that this play, perhaps better than any other, compares favourably with the work of the ancient Greek. *Phèdre* and *Iphigénie* are cast in the same mould, are equally strong in genuine human interest, and exhibit the passions of love and despair, as men and women of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries are now and then wont to experience them; but, brought into forced comparison with the lofty work of their originals, they do not show as favourably as is the case with the *Andromaque*. Racine was more than justified in trying to adopt at least the main situations and outlines of some of the masterpieces of Greek tragedy, and in making of these adaptations a present to his country. And in doing this he was never content for a moment with the mere imitation of his models, but set himself conscientiously to re-create and—hardest task of all—to be original even when treading in the footsteps of others. But we are inclined to doubt his judgment in selecting the same subjects which Corneille had already treated, and that so recently and so well. In *Bérénice* and *Mithridate* Racine placed himself in direct contrast with his rival, and if his object were to assert his supremacy by boldly challenging comparison, the result was not altogether as happy as he may have hoped that it would be. In the first-mentioned tragedy, however, Racine shows perhaps most favourably as compared with his rival; but it must be borne in mind that the younger poet was at that time in his prime, whereas Corneille was an old man; and the subject



itself, dealing with a deep and comparatively uneventful passion of love, was more suited to the delicate talent of the younger man. It was impossible that a comparison should not have been instituted between the two great tragic authors, even during their lives ; and it was certain that the balance of their merits would be continually struck and readjusted by posterity. English literature hardly affords the basis of a similar parallel ; at all events not between two authors of the first rank. Perhaps the nearest approach to one is that which has often been drawn between Dryden and Pope. Dryden's roughness, energy, variety, is contrasted with Pope's polished nicety and regularity ; Corneille stands in much the same relation to Racine. Pope vied with and imitated Dryden, taking precisely the same subjects<sup>1</sup> on which to exercise his genius ; and this, as we have seen, is what Racine did with respect to Corneille.<sup>2</sup>

Racine was, above all, the painter of love, and to the delineation of that passion he sacrifices nearly everything, —except, of course, his two sacred tragedies. He does not

<sup>1</sup> *St. Cecilia's day.*

<sup>2</sup> M. Henri Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. xiii. p. 202, carries the comparison between Corneille and Racine to some degree of minuteness. "All is contrast between these two men : their physiognomy alone would suffice to indicate the difference of their genius ; the majesty which shines on the forehead and lips of Corneille is somewhat rude and rustic, like that of the gods of ancient Rome ; the beauty of Racine is the most elegant and regular, but perhaps the least accentuated amongst the physiognomies of the great men of that time, almost all of them fine. The life of the two men differed no less." All these comparisons of the two great dramatists may best be met by the following epigram of Voltaire :—

" De Beausse et moi, criaillours effrontés,  
Dans un souper clabaudions à merveille,  
Et tour à tour épluchions les beautés  
Et les défauts de Racine et Corneille.  
A piailler serions encor, je croi,  
Si n'eussions vu sur la double colline,  
Le grand Corneille et le tendre Racine,  
Qui se moquaient et de Beausse et de moi."

try to be historically true, nor endeavour to sketch men in general, but a man or a woman in particular, chiefly given up to one passion. He works that passion out to its most logical deductions, but does not bring in the foreground its excesses or its deformities. His personages are nearly always more consistent than they would be in real life, and use a grandiloquent, noble, and elegant language, often totally unsuited to the character which they are intended to represent. His confidants and servants talk in the same way as their masters, and his Romans, Greeks, and Turks all speak the same language. He adheres to the unity of time and place; hence the continual dialogues between the hero or heroine and his or her servant, and the lengthy and often wearisome descriptions which take the place of action. But, this once admitted, his abstract delineations of passion become masterly, and his personages, though cold and correct, and only representing the courtiers of Louis XIV., move in their limited sphere so grandly that we cannot help being moved by them. The upwelling of the emotions, raised by a tragedy of Racine, may be different from the violent storm of feelings that sweep over us when we look at one of Shakspeare's plays; there may be a good deal of reflection mixed up with it, but it is there, it exists, it carries us away, and this stamps Racine as one of the master-minds of his age. As he was *par excellence* the painter of love, it follows that his heroines occupy the first place on his dramatic canvas. Hermione, Roxane, Bérénice, Eryphile, Phedra, stand out, and they all love more or less passionately; whilst the feeble heroes Bajazet, Hippolytus, Xipharès, Antiochus, are mere puppets, who allow themselves languidly to be worshipped, but hardly ever show that they really and ardently love. The confidants and the other secondary characters of Racine's plays are lay figures, only fit to appear under a portico, and to listen to the explanations of or to give a cue to the principal characters.

These tragedies, therefore, are a faithful reproduction of the court of the *Grand Monarque*, who majestically allowed himself to be idolised, and for whose love almost all the ladies of the court were in rivalry. The inferior personages of these plays represent, indeed, the courtiers of Louis XIV., gilded nonentities when the monarch was present, and whose only duty seemed to be to enhance the splendour of the king. Thus, in order to understand Racine well, we must understand the age and court of Louis.

Of Racine as a man, let it be sufficient to say that his faults were those of his age, his virtues and talents his own. "The tender Racine," as he is generally called, was, up to the age of thirty-nine, over sensitive; he wholly gave himself up to his impressions for the time being; and whether in love or writing a tragedy, his entire soul was in the pursuit, so that a check in either one or other produced a reaction which made him very bitter, and even pugnacious, as the prefaces of nearly all his classical tragedies and his epigrams, as well as his *Plaideurs*, testify. After his marriage he tried to unite the Christian with the courtier, and is said to have succeeded in both.

### § 3. MINOR POETS.

By Corneille first, and by Molière and Racine in quick succession, French tragedy and comedy had been almost simultaneously created and brought to perfection. There remained, as a complementary dramatic achievement of the age of the *Grand Monarque*, the creation of the opera. For a society which found its most natural location and surroundings in the court and in the drawing-room, for which the stage itself was a representative court and drawing-



room, and which was never better pleased than when it could witness such brilliant displays as Corneille provided for it in *Andromède*—a *tragédie à machines*, the *Golden Fleece* and *Psyché*, or Molière in his *Mariage forcé* or the *Princesse d'Elide*, the opera pure and simple was nothing short of a necessity. This opera it received at the hands of Quinault,<sup>1</sup> who, assisted by the musical talent of Lulli, contributed as much as any of his literary contemporaries to the splendour and magnificence of the court festivals. The fame of Quinault has undergone many strange vicissitudes; and whilst Boileau has lashed him in his satires,<sup>2</sup> and could never tolerate his works half as patiently as he tolerated the man himself, Voltaire<sup>3</sup> has since attempted to raise him to the first rank of dramatists. No doubt his real worth lies somewhere between these two extreme estimates; but his best title to consideration is found in the fact that he gave to his generation precisely what it wanted, and that his *Astarte* and other plays continued in favour with the public even after the production of *Andromaque*. Whilst, however, his earlier dramatic efforts, with the exception of a passable comedy, *La Mère Coquette*, are now rarely read, the best of his operas, *Armide* and *Atys* in particular, still boast of numerous admirers. The force of Quinault lies, it must be confessed, in his easy versification and musical ear: he would have made an excellent librettist in the nineteenth century—and perhaps we could not hit upon a better measure of his talent. In connection with his friend Lulli, a Florentine attracted to Versailles by the munificence of the king, he founded the *Académie royale de Musique*, in the year 1672. The charter granted to it by

<sup>1</sup> 1635-1688.

<sup>2</sup> "Ces discours sur l'amour seul roulans . . .  
Et tous ces lieux communs de morale lubrique  
Que Lulli réchauffa du son de sa musique."—*Sat.* x. 42.

<sup>3</sup> Voltaire was no great admirer of Boileau, whom in one place he stigmatises as "Zoile de Quinault et flatteur de Louis."



Louis authorises "noblemen and ladies of noble birth to sing at the representations of the said academy without loss of rank."

A minor poet of the same age, who is also blamed by Boileau,<sup>1</sup> was Brébeuf,<sup>2</sup> the translator of Lucan's *Pharsalia*. Brébeuf's speciality in translation was that he chose, from deliberate purpose, to give back idea by idea, rather than word by word; thus his rendering is what we should call very free, but it is undoubtedly elegant, and as a rule judicious. His fault was that he made himself too literal in the interpretation of ideas; for, after all, the great art of translation seems to be to avoid the crude reproduction of unfamiliar or hyperbolic ideas, whilst retaining as far as possible the actual phrases of the original. An example of Brébeuf's best manner may be found in the following version. Lucan wrote: "The Phœnicians were the first—if we may believe tradition—who ventured to represent by rude characters the words (which they wished) to endure."<sup>3</sup>

Brébeuf expands as follows:—

"From him comes to us that ingenious art  
To paint words and to speak to the eyes,  
And by the different traits of drawn figures  
To give colour and body to thoughts."<sup>4</sup>

His boldest manner is exemplified by a couplet which Boileau

<sup>1</sup> "Mais n'allez point aussi, sur les pas de Brébeuf,  
Même en une Pharsale, entasser sur les rives  
'De morts et de mourants cent montagnes plaintives'  
Prenez mieux votre ton."—*Art Poétique*, chant i.

<sup>2</sup> 1618-1661.

<sup>3</sup> "Phœnices primi, famæ si creditur, ausi  
Mansuram rudibus vocem signare figuris."  
*Pharsalia*, bk. iii. v. 220.

<sup>4</sup> "C'est de lui que nous vient cet art ingénieux  
De peindre la parole et de parler aux yeux,  
Et par les traits divers de figures tracées  
Donner de la couleur et du corps aux pensées."

naturally laid hold of for the purpose of turning him into ridicule. Lucan has : "He sees rivers accelerated with blood, and corpses in heaps, as high as lofty hills." <sup>1</sup> Which Brébeuf exaggerates thus :—

"A hundred plaintive mountains of dead and dying,  
A hundred fugitive waves of an impetuous blood." <sup>2</sup>

This is hyperbole with a vengeance.

<sup>1</sup> "Cernit propulsa cruore  
Flumina, et excelsos cumulis æquantia colles  
Corpora." *Pharsalia*, bk. i. v. 13.

<sup>2</sup> De morts et de mourants cent montagnes plaintives,  
D'un sang impétueux cent vagues fugitives."

Corneille himself had written :

"Ces fleuves teints de sang et rendus plus rapides  
Par les débordements de tant de parricides . . .  
Ces montagnes de morts."

See Gérusez, *Histoire de la littérature française*, vol. ii. p. 230.

## CHAPTER IV.

## § 1. BOSSUET AND THE PULPIT ORATORS.

THERE are some half-a-dozen men of the age of Louis XIV. who, considered by themselves, might seem to be the natural centre of the literary spirit of the epoch, to neglect whom were to leave all the rest in darkness, and to consider whom in an exhaustive manner were to discharge more than half the duty of the historian. If Bossuet is not one of these, he is at all events one of the intellectual giants of his day, one of the pivots on which the intellectual history of France must ever turn, and, from the point of view where the domains of literature and religion are conterminous, undoubtedly the most conspicuous landmark which the eye encounters. As a pulpit orator he is supreme amongst Frenchmen ; as a philosopher and a man of literary judgment he occupies high rank ; whilst his personal influence was probably superior to that of any of his contemporaries. Of his effect upon the character and conduct of the king a perspicuous critic<sup>1</sup> has remarked that Bossuet was " perhaps of all the writers of the seventeenth century the one who can least be separated from Louis XIV. There was a real natural affinity between them ; both were of the race of rulers. They advance straight onwards, looking neither to the right nor to the left, and refuse to recognise that which might disconcert them. What the king gave was but little, compared with what Bossuet was worth and with what he gave. For such a man what was a bishopric,

<sup>1</sup> Paul Albert, *La littérature française au dix-septième siècle*.—Bossuet. I am greatly indebted to this learned critic for several parts of this chapter.

and the sterile honour of instructing the Dauphin? Instinctively we imagine for him one of those brilliant positions which bring to light all the faculties of a man. He would probably have secured it if he had not been born in that parliamentary *bourgeoisie* which the king detested, and which had produced Broussel. Bossuet was none the less the sonorous herald of absolute monarchy and of state-religion."

Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet<sup>1</sup> was the son of a parliamentary advocate at Dijon, where he was born just four years after the birth of Pascal. After receiving a rudimentary education at the school of the Jesuits in his native town, he was sent to the college de Navarre, in Paris, at the age of fifteen, for the purpose of pursuing his studies. His reputation as an orator was established before he had reached his nineteenth year. An anecdote is related of him, upon excellent authority,<sup>2</sup> according to which he was introduced, when seventeen years old, to one of the *réunions* of Madame de Rambouillet, in the celebrated *salon bleu*, whither his fame had preceded him, and had been received with no little scepticism. One of the company gave out a subject; he was allowed a few minutes to collect himself; and after a short silence he delivered a discourse which more than justified the good things which had been said of him. Voiture, who was present, declared that he had never heard any one "preach so early, or so late." Another of the audience was probably Cospeau, Bishop of Lisieux, who subsequently advised the young student to abstain from public displays of his talent, and especially "not to make the preaching of the gospel a profane amusement." From that day Bossuet studied, instead of lending himself out as an amateur preacher. At the age of twenty it was necessary for him to sustain a thesis for his

<sup>1</sup> 1627-1704.

<sup>2</sup> Tallemant des Réaux. *Historiettes*, xcix.; and Ledieu, *Mémoire touchant Messire J. B. Bossuet, évêque de Meaux*, ed. Guettée, 1855.



bachelor's degree ; three years later, when soliciting his license to preach, he argued before the grand chamber of the Parliament of Paris the validity of his degree of doctor of theology, and in the same year, he was chosen by his fellow-students to pronounce the usual complimentary harangue.<sup>1</sup> By this time he preached regularly in the chapel of the College de Navarre, having been ordained sub-deacon in 1648. He was made a doctor of divinity in 1652, and was appointed to a benefice at Metz, where he became successively arch-deacon and dean. Here, in 1655, he published his first pamphlet, *a Refutation of the Catechism* of the Protestant minister, Paul Ferri. From the year 1657 he preached constantly before the king and the court ; he was engaged as tutor to the Grand Dauphin,<sup>2</sup> the son of Louis XIV., and was consecrated bishop of Condom, from whence he was presently translated to Meaux.<sup>3</sup>

The *Treatise of the Knowledge of God*, the *Discourse on Universal History*, and the *Politics*, were written with a special view to the author's distinguished pupil ; but the latter seems to have been far too distinguished to appreciate — probably even to read them. Bossuet's instructions do not indeed appear to have been attended by great success, and it is likely enough that his lessons aimed over the head of the learner. Moreover, Bossuet had little of the firmness which was requisite for so difficult a task ; and if he had been as firm as he was ardent and accomplished, he would have been equal to, and would probably have discharged far more important duties. His

<sup>1</sup> See E. Gandar, *Bossuet orateur*, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 1661-1711.

<sup>3</sup> His principal writings, in addition to his *Sermons* and *Correspondence* are a *Treatise of the Knowledge of God and of oneself* (1661), an *Exposition of the Catholic faith* (1671), a *Discourse on Universal History* (1681), *Meditations on the Gospel* (1682), *Lofty thoughts on the Mysteries* (1682), a *History of the differences of the Protestant Churches* (1690), *Maxims on Comedy* (1694), and *Politics drawn from Holy Scripture*, the latter a posthumous work, published in 1709.

complaisance, his tenderness for the weaknesses and crimes of the great, his desire to please, or his fear to give offence, were the weak points in a lofty and brilliant character. At court he was often made a mediator in difficult and delicate entanglements, and even permitted himself now and then to fall into somewhat compromising situations. He might more than once have prevented much evil, or saved the king from embarrassment or reproach, if he had had the moral courage to speak to him, as perhaps he might have spoken with impunity. In fact, the jest which a certain courtier made at the bishop's expense was at once well deserved and appropriate. Bossuet had been deputed to endeavour to effect an arrangement in a certain matter with M. de Tréville; and when he reported the result of his interview, he said, "He is a man all in one piece; he has no joints." Whereupon the other, being told what the bishop had said of him, rejoined, "as for him he has no bones."<sup>1</sup>

Bossuet, as may be divined from the nature of his education and from the mere titles of his works, was a strict and unyielding Roman Catholic; and in this respect a still more unfortunate slur rests upon his character. His subservience to the king had become so aggravated in the year 1682 that he made himself one of the principal accomplices in the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and he cannot be acquitted of at least an indirect influence in bringing about the shameful and sanguinary *dragonnades*.<sup>2</sup> Writing to Nicole, after the

<sup>1</sup> Sainte-Beuve, *Port-Royal*, vol. v. p. 503.

<sup>2</sup> On this phase of Bossuet's character see Réaume *Histoire de J. B. Bossuet*. In the *Nouvelle Biographie Générale*, is an article "Bossuet," written by the Abbé Receveur, *doyen* of the faculty of theology of Paris, in which the following passage occurs:—"The revocation of the Edict of Nantes had changed in France the conditions of Protestantism. Bossuet, like all the clergy, and all the bodies of the State, applauded this measure. . . . We may at least observe that we ought not to judge this measure according to the ideas of tolerance so universal at present; that the turbulent spirit of the Calvinists, their always increasing pretensions, the civil wars which they had so often raised, and their daily disputes with the Roman Catholics,



Protestants had been partly driven out of France, and partly massacred, he exclaims: "Sad condition of France, whilst she was compelled to nourish and tolerate, under the name of Reformed, so many disguised Socinians, so many persons without religion, who, by the confession of their own ministers, only thought of the means of overturning Christianity. I have no desire to argue upon what has taken place as a finished politician. I adore with you the designs of God, who desired to reveal by the diversion of our Protestants that mystery of iniquity, and to purge France of those monsters." The spectacle here presented is sufficiently sad, and it speaks for itself. Bossuet attacked also Fénelon, about the doctrine of Quietism, in which it is not our purpose to enter, but in which he showed, to say the least, extreme vivacity, and made use of some very strong expressions, indicating an animosity,

may have caused it to be considered as necessary for the tranquillity of the State; and that, after all, it ill became them to complain that the public exercise of their worship was forbidden to them when they gave themselves the example of a much more rigorous intolerance, and pronounced severe penalties against Catholics and dissidents of all kinds, wherever they were masters. Moreover, it is certain that Bossuet personally always showed himself much opposed to measures of compulsion and violence towards the Protestants. We see, by his correspondence with M. de Basville, Intendant of Languedoc, and with several bishops of this province, that he disapproved of the rigours and vexations which they employed to compel them to be present at mass. He never employed in his diocese anything but gentle and instructive measures; he even used his credit and influence to prevent the rigorous measures of the civil authority, and to protect even sometimes seditious Protestants against the just severity of the laws. This system of moderation was not without success. A great number of Protestants became converted." To speak "of the turbulent spirit and the increasing pretensions of the Calvinists" at the time of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes is a palpable mis-statement, and so is the possible necessity for "the tranquillity of the State." To say of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes that by this measure only "the public exercise of their worship was forbidden to them" is something more than a clerical error. Besides, granted that the Protestants gave "the example of religious intolerance," two wrongs do not make one right; whilst the expressions, "seditious Protestants," and "just severity of the laws," show the tendency of the writer of the article. Nothing is said about the *dragonnades*, for which see Sir John Reresby's *Travels and Memoirs*.

flavoured with the *odium theologicum*, in every way unworthy of him.

As a politician Bossuet no doubt honestly believed in the system which Louis XIV. and his ministers—following in the groove which Richelieu and Mazarin had marked out for them—assiduously built up and maintained: the system of government through the absolutism of the monarch, the despotism of the king supported and sanctioned by the authority of the Church. Authority was the corner-stone of this edifice; liberty was not the privilege of the subject, but a favour granted to him by authority. The example set by England, twice notably in the course of the seventeenth century—on the death of Charles I. and the expulsion of James II.—was utterly neglected by France: and as the long reign of the *Grand Monarque* drew towards its close, all the weaknesses consequent upon the abuse of absolute power became exaggerated, whilst the causes which had produced the first glories of Louis's reign ceased to operate. A few wise men saw the danger; Fénelon openly rebelled against it; Saint-Simon, Vauban, and one or two more did their best to counteract it. But Louis was obstinate and selfish to the last degree; he neither saw nor cared to see the rocks a-head; and those who ought to have been the first to warn him were the most eager to conceal the truth from him. Of these prophets of good, Bossuet was the one upon whom the greatest responsibility rested; and the excuse for his silence is to be found only in the fact that he really believed in absolute power, as ordained and imposed by God himself. In the system of statecraft to which his perverted judgment gave its assent, judge by a brief extract from his sermon *On Evangelical preaching* as to the place which he assigned to God's anointed. He thus apostrophises:

“O God! give efficacy to thy word. O God, thou seest in what place I am preaching, and thou knowest, O God, what I



ought to say here. Give me words of wisdom; give me effectual and powerful words; give me prudence; give me force; give me circumspection; give me simplicity. Thou knowest, O living God, that the ardent zeal which animates me for the service of my king makes me happy when I announce thy Gospel to this great monarch, veritably great, and worthy, by the greatness of his soul, to hear nothing but great things; worthy, by the love which he bears to the truth, never to be deceived. Sire, it is God who ought to speak from this pulpit; may He then, by his Holy Spirit—for it is He alone who can do so great a work, cause that the man may not appear therein!"

When this was the language of the pulpit, imagine what must have been the language of the ante-chamber and the throne-room.

The *Discourse on Universal History* is one of the few contributions which the seventeenth century has made to historical literature in France; and, whatever be thought of the scheme on which it is framed, the credit must still remain to Bossuet of having in some degree foreshadowed the establishment of a philosophy of history. The philosophy is, indeed, by no means a wide one, its central idea being simply and solely the subordination of all historical facts to the one fact of Christianity. With Bossuet the foundation of the Christian religion is the alpha and omega of profane history; or rather, with him all history becomes sacred from its dependence upon this fact. Kings rule in order that God may be obeyed; subjects tremble before their Kings because God has pronounced His laws. It was Balzac who said that "men are the actors, God the poet," but it remained for Bossuet to enlarge upon the text. He saw the Deity omnipresent and omnipotent, in every age of the world's history; he saw the conquerors of every age, adding each one his contribution to the glory of the God of Christians. The pith of his discourse and of his system is contained in the follow-

ing passage, which we may quote both in English and in the original, as an example at once of Bossuet's philosophy and of his style.

"From the highest Heaven God holds the reins of every kingdom; He has all hearts in His hand; at one moment He restrains the passions, at another He unbridles them, and thus sets in motion the whole human race. Would He create conquerors? He makes fear to march before them, and breathes invincible boldness into them and their soldiers. Would He create legislators? He sends them his spirit of wisdom and foresight; He makes them anticipate the evils which threaten States, and lay the foundations of public tranquillity. He knows the wisdom of man, ever falling short in some particular; He enlightens it; He extends his view, and then He abandons it to its ignorance; He blinds it, confounds it by its own means; it encloses, it embarrasses itself in its own subtilities, and its precautions are a snare to it. God thus effects His formidable judgments by the ever infallible rules of His justice. It is He who prepares effects in the most distant causes, and who strikes those mighty blows whose results reach so far. When he wishes to let loose these results and overturn empires, all is weak and inconstant in counsel. Egypt, in other respects so wise, moves intoxicated, dazed and tottering, because the Lord has breathed the spirit of giddiness in its counsels; it no longer knows what it does, it is lost. But let not men deceive themselves: when God pleases he restores the disturbed sense, and he who has triumphed over the blindness of others falls himself into the thickest darkness, often with no other reason to overturn his sense than his long prosperity.

"It is thus that God rules over all nations. Let us speak no more of chance or fortune, or speak of them only as of a name whereby we cover our ignorance. That which is chance in relation to our uncertain counsels is a concerted design in a higher counsel, to wit, in that eternal counsel which includes all causes and all effects in one and the same order. Thus all combines to the same end; and it is because we cannot hear all, that we find chance or irregularity in special occurrences.

"In this way is verified what the Apostle says, that God 'is



the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.<sup>1</sup> Blessed, in that His rest is undisturbed, who sees everything change without himself changing, and who causes all changes by an immutable counsel; who gives and who takes away power; who transfers it from one man to another, from one house to another, from one people to another, to show that they all hold it simply as a loan, and that He is the only one in whom it naturally resides.

"This is why all who govern feel themselves subjected to a greater force. They do more or less than they think, and their counsels never fail to have unforeseen results. They are neither the controllers of the dispositions which past ages have induced in the affairs (of their kingdoms), nor can they foresee the course which the future will take, much less can they force it. He alone holds everything in His hand, who knows the name of that which is and that which is not yet, who holds sway over all ages, and who anticipates all counsels."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paul's *Second Epistle to Timothy*, vi. 15.

<sup>2</sup> "Dieu tient du plus haut des cieux les rênes de tous les royaumes; il a tous les cœurs en sa main: tantôt il retient les passions, tantôt il leur lâche la bride, et par là il remue tout le genre humain. Veut-il faire des conquérants? il fait marcher l'épouvante devant eux, et il inspire à eux et à leurs soldats une hardiesse invincible. Veut-il faire des législateurs? il leur envoie son esprit de sagesse et de prévoyance; il leur fait prévenir les maux qui menacent les États, et poser les fondements de la tranquillité publique. Il connaît la sagesse humaine, toujours courte par quelque endroit; il l'éclaire, il étend ses vues, et puis il l'abandonne à ses ignorances: il l'aveugle, il la confond par elle-même: elle s'enveloppe, elle s'embarrasse dans ses propres subtilités, et ses précautions lui sont un piège. Dieu exerce par ce moyen ses redoutables jugements, selon les règles de sa justice toujours infaillible. C'est lui qui prépare les effets dans les causes les plus éloignées, et qui frappe ces grands coups dont le contre-coup porte si loin. Quand il veut lâcher le dernier et renverser les empires, tout est faible et irrégulier dans les conseils. L'Égypte, autrefois si sage, marche enivrée, étourdie et chancelante, parce que le Seigneur a répandu l'esprit de vertige dans ses conseils; elle ne sait plus ce qu'elle fait, elle est perdue. Mais que les hommes ne s'y trompent pas: Dieu redresse quand il lui plaît le sens égaré; et celui qui insultait à l'aveuglement des autres tombe lui-même dans des ténèbres plus épaisses, sans qu'il faille souvent autre chose, pour lui renverser le sens, que ses longues prospérités.

"C'est ainsi que Dieu règne sur tous les peuples. Ne parlons plus de hasard ni de fortune, ou parlons en seulement comme d'un nom dont nous couvrons notre ignorance. Ce qui est hasard à l'égard de nos conseils incertains est un dessein concerté dans un conseil plus haut, c'est-à-dire dans ce conseil éternel

But it is by his sermons, and especially by his funeral sermons, inheriting as they do the spirit and grace of the ancient French panegyrists, that Bossuet will always be chiefly known ; and, as is the case with all orators of comparatively recent date, the tradition of his spoken eloquence doubles the fame which he derives from his written works. His contemporary La Bruyère called him a Father of the Church ; and he is in fact a legitimate successor of the patristic writers and preachers of the earlier Christian centuries, who swayed their hearers by their tongues as much as, or more than, they persuade later generations by their pens. Eliminating the political element from Bossuet's sermons, and considering them merely from a literary point of view—in so far as sermons can be considered from such a point—that which remains is marked by much common sense, over and above its eloquence and unction. Fénelon says of him that he had read little of the mystics, and scarcely knew St. François de Sales. However this may have been, it is certain that Bossuet had studied Descartes, and was familiar with Pascal and his fellow Jansenists. The breadth of his views made him distasteful to Rome, which could not but look with jealousy on his persistent elevation of Louis as the head

qui renferme toutes les causes et tous les effets dans un même ordre. De cette sorte, tout concourt à la même fin ; et c'est faute d'entendre le tout, que nous trouvons du hasard ou de l'irrégularité dans les rencontres particulières.

"Par là se vérifie ce que dit l'Apôtre, que 'Dieu est heureux, et le seul puissant, roi des rois, et seigneur des seigneurs.' Heureux, dont le repos est inaltérable, qui voit tout changer sans changer lui-même, et qui fait tous les changements par un conseil immuable : qui donne et qui ôte la puissance ; qui la transporte d'un homme à un autre, d'une maison à une autre, d'un peuple à un autre, pour montrer qu'ils ne l'ont tous que par emprunt, et qu'il est le seul en qui elle réside naturellement.

"C'est pourquoi tous ceux qui gouvernent se sentent assujettis à une force majeure. Ils font plus ou moins qu'ils ne pensent, et leurs conseils n'ont jamais manqué d'avoir des effets imprévus. Ni ils ne sont maîtres des dispositions que les siècles passés ont mises dans les affaires, ni ils ne peuvent prévoir le cours que prendra l'avenir, loin qu'ils le puissent forcer. Celui-là seul tient tout en sa main, qui sait le nom de ce qui est et de ce qui n'est pas encore, qui préside à tous les temps et prévient tous les conseils."



of the Gallican Church, to the virtual derogation of the Papal assumptions; and in the judgment which the Sacred College pronounced in the dispute between Bossuet and Fénelon, the first was said to be in the right, but is by no means allowed to bear away the palm without a wholesome castigation; "The bishop of Cambrai (Fénelon) has erred through excess of the love of God; the bishop of Meaux (Bossuet) has sinned through lack of the love of his neighbour." The fact is that Bossuet, influential as he was with his King and his countrymen, powerful as has been thought to be his championship of divine right and his argument against the Protestant churches,<sup>1</sup> falls short of greatness in almost every single respect, except that of his ardent and magnificent eloquence, wherein he undoubtedly lays claim to be considered the pride and model of Christian rhetoric. The French language, and French prose in particular, had by this time become, beyond comparison, the most polished, forcible, and efficient instrument of human speech, the most suited for logical and persuasive efforts, the most capable of reaping brilliant rhetorical triumphs, but, perhaps also, too florid and ornate to suit the more natural taste of the present day.

A disciple at once of Bossuet and of Balzac—yet a man of whom Fénelon could say, when he heard of his death, that he had lost his master—was Esprit Fléchier,<sup>2</sup> born at Pernes, near Carpentras, who began his career as a professor of rhetoric at Narbonne. At the age of thirty, after spending three years at Paris, he became tutor to the son of M. Lefèvre de Caumartin, *maître des requêtes*, whom, in the year 1635, he accompanied into Auvergne, on the occasion of the *Grands Jours* of that district. One result of that journey was that Fléchier wrote his *Memorials of the Grands Jours d'Auvergne*, a most in-

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Burnet maintains that Bossuet had no need to give himself so much trouble to prove the variations of the Reformed Churches, for that Protestants never pretended to be infallible or inspired.

<sup>2</sup> 1632-1710.

teresting sketch of the social condition of the French provinces at that time, and of the administration of the law under the comparatively feeble government of Mazarin. In this record, familiar and full of spirit, which scarcely foretold the genius of the sacred orator whose funeral orations were hereafter to be deemed worthy of a place beside those of Bossuet, one is enabled to form an idea of "the barbarism in which certain districts of France were still plunged, in the midst of that brilliant civilisation of the seventeenth century," and how "many of the great lords, who in the assemblies of Paris appeared so gallant and amiable, lived amongst their subjects," so that "one might imagine oneself in the full tide of feudalism."<sup>1</sup> In Paris Fléchier was an *habitué* of the hôtel de Rambouillet in its later days, being welcomed on account of his eloquence and wit. He himself describes the "cradle of polished society" as a place "frequented by many persons of quality and merit, who composed a select court, numerous without confusion, modest without constraint, learned without pride, polished without affectation;" and if his estimate was, as we know that it was, too appreciative in at least one respect, still it was just on the whole, and the fact of his being an acceptable guest of Madame de Rambouillet and her daughter is in itself a witness to his literary worth. In 1672 he pronounced the funeral oration upon the death of Madame de Montausier, being by this time recognised as one of the loftiest and most ornate of pulpit orators, in that higher and dignified style which Bossuet had done so much to introduce. Four years later he eclipsed himself in an oration on Henri de la Tour d'Auvergne, killed at the battle of Salzbach in 1675, son of the Marshal de Bouillon, and better known as Turenne, who had changed his religion and become a Roman Catholic, converted, it was said, by Bossuet's *Exposition of Faith*. In Louis XIV.'s time people seem to have been easily converted.

<sup>1</sup> H. Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. xiii. p. 68.



In 1673 Fléchier succeeded Godeau in his *fauteuil* at the Academy; and although he was now more a preacher than a writer, and more an ecclesiastic than a literary man, he never lost his love for literature. In his *Grands Jours* he had declared himself in favour of the stage, "provided that it offends neither against propriety nor against the order of civil society," and he was never sufficiently austere to withdraw the declaration. He was made bishop of Lavaur, and subsequently of Nîmes, and Louis XIV. appointed him almoner to the Dauphine, for whom he wrote his *Life of Theodosius*. In his late years Fléchier had greatly toned down the efflorescence of his youth, and had lost all his liberality of mind. He followed the example of Bossuet in applauding the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and the cruel *dragonnades* which resulted from them; as indeed did nearly all the great men and accomplished women of the day—La Bruyère, La Fontaine, Madame de Sévigné, and the rest. Fléchier went farther still: he maintained that many converts had not genuinely returned to the orthodox faith, and joined in the clamour raised by the most intolerant men of the age, who, at the close of the century, demanded that the *mal convertis* should be subjected to "a wholesome restraint." Bossuet had the moral courage to protest, in opposition to the majority of the bishops, against the proposal to force all professed converts to attend the celebration of the mass; and the king taking the same view as Bossuet, extreme measures were avoided.

We should wrong Fléchier if we refrained from giving a short specimen of his oration on the death of Turenne. It is considered his best, and full of antitheses, like everything he has written. Madame de Sévigné says in one of her letters "that she never heard anything so fine."

"If M. de Turenne had but known how to fight and to conquer, if he had not raised himself above the level of human virtues,

if his valour and prudence had not been animated by a spirit of faith and charity, I should place him in the ranks of Scipio and Fabius ; I should leave to vanity the charge of honour and vanity, and should not come into a sacred place to pronounce the eulogy of a profane man. If he had ended his days in blindness and error, it would be in vain for me to praise virtues which God had not crowned, I should but shed useless tears upon his tomb: and if I spoke of his glory it would be but to deplore his misfortune. But, thanks be to Jesus Christ, I speak of a Christian illuminated by the light of faith, acting upon the principles of a pure religion, and consecrating by a sincere piety all which can flatter the ambition or the pride of men. Thus do the praises which I give to him return to God, who is their source ; and as it is the truth which sanctified him, so also it is the truth which praises him.

"Gentlemen, how complete was his conversion, and how different was he from those who, deserting heresy from interested motives, change their opinion without changing their morals, enter the bosom of the Church only to wound her more nearly by a scandalous life, and ceased to be declared enemies only by becoming rebellious children! . . . He no sooner embraced sound doctrine than he became its defender: the moment he had girt himself with the arms of light he combated the works of darkness: he trembled as he saw the abyss from whence he had issued, and stretched out his hand to those whom he had left behind. It might be said that he was charged with restoring to the bosom of the church all whom schism had separated from it; he invited them by his counsels, he allured them by his services, he urged them by his arguments, he convinced them by his experience, he made them see the reefs on which human reason suffers so many shipwrecks, and showed them behind his feet, according to the expression of Saint Augustine, the bridge of the mercy of God, across which he had himself so recently passed."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Si M. de Turenne n'avait su que combattre et vaincre, s'il ne s'était élevé au-dessus des vertus humaines, si sa valeur et sa prudence n'avaient été animées d'un esprit de foi et de charité, je le mettrais au rang des Scipions et des Fabius ; je laisserais à la vanité le soin d'honorer la vanité, et je ne viendrais pas dans un lieu saint faire l'éloge d'un homme profane. S'il avait fini ses jours dans



This is fine. It is, however, curious that Fléchier in another part of this funeral oration of the converted hero mentions without scruple that Turenne provided the necessary funds to assist "those who abandon all to follow Jesus Christ who calls them," as well as "to gain over those whom cupidity and interest still retain in their errors;" though the bishop does not say anything of the tender mercies of the booted apostles whom Louis XIV. employed to convert his people, nor of Turenne's conduct in the Palatinate.

Fléchier, as we have said, was the disciple of Balzac as well as of Bossuet, perhaps more of Balzac than of Bossuet. His style, sparkling and ornate even to the point of vain-glorious display, fell short of Bossuet's dignity and impressive earnestness; much more so than another pulpit-orator of the same day, Bourdaloue, who has been aptly described as "one of the finest and best of Bossuet's works."<sup>1</sup> Bourdaloue<sup>2</sup> was in fact something more than a creation of the master-

l'aveuglement et dans l'erreur, je louerais en vain des vertus que Dieu n'aurait pas couronnées, je répandrais des larmes inutiles sur son tombeau : et, si je parlais de sa gloire, ce ne serait que pour déplorer son malheur. Mais, grâces à Jésus-Christ, je parle d'un chrétien éclairé des lumières de la foi, agissant par les principes d'une religion pure, et consacrant par une sincère piété tout ce qui peut flatter l'ambition ou l'orgueil des hommes. Ainsi les louanges que je lui donne retournent à Dieu, qui en est la source, et comme c'est la vérité qui l'a sanctifié, c'est aussi la vérité qui le loue.

"Que sa conversion fut entière, messieurs ! et qu'il fut différent de ceux qui, sortant de l'hérésie par des vues intéressées, changent de sentiment sans changer de mœurs, n'entrent dans le sein de l'Eglise que pour la blesser de plus près par une vie scandaleuse, et ne cessent d'être ennemis déclarés qu'en devenant enfants rebelles ! . . . "A peine a-t-il embrassé la saine doctrine, qu'il en devient le défenseur ; aussitôt qu'il est revêtu des armes de lumière, il combat les œuvres de ténèbres ; il regarde en tremblant l'abîme d'où il est sorti et il tend la main à ceux qu'il y a laissés ; on dirait qu'il est chargé de ramener dans le sein de l'Eglise tous ceux que le schisme en a séparés : il les invite par ses conseils, il les attire par ses bienfaits, il les presse par ses raisons, il les convainc par ses expériences, il leur fait voir les écueils où la raison humaine fait tant de naufrages, et leur montre derrière lui, selon les termes de saint Augustin, le pont de la miséricorde de Dieu, par où il vient de passer lui-même."

<sup>1</sup> Maury, *Essai sur l'Eloquence de la Chaire*, § 18.

<sup>2</sup> 1632-1704.

preacher of the age; he vied with him closely both in his success with his hearers and in his estimation by posterity. Born at Bourges, Louis Bourdaloue entered the society of Jesus as a noviciate in his sixteenth year, and his precocity in oratorical skill was as remarkable as that of the young student who had delighted the critics of Madame de Rambouillet's *salon bleu*. One does not expect to learn much concerning the life of a Jesuit, at all events of a Jesuit who serves his order in no more public or worldly manner than by occupying the pulpit; and of Bourdaloue we know little more than that he raised his voice against the king's irregularities of conduct;<sup>1</sup> that he went to Languedoc to preach to those who were supposed to be insincere in their conversion from Protestantism, that he administered the last rites of his church to Colbert, and that he further united with Bossuet in condemning the mysticism which, under the name of quietism,<sup>2</sup> became partly fashionable through the writings of Madame de la Mothe-Guyon, which was dallied with by Fénelon, and which even brought Madame de Maintenon for a short time under its influence. Little as it is, almost all that we are told of Bourdaloue redounds vastly to his credit. By his severe morality, his practical and common-sense Christianity, his modest learning and his evangelical preaching, he did much to blunt for a time the point of Pascal's weapons against the Society of Jesus, and reflected as great honour upon the order to which he belonged as any other Jesuit that could be named.

Bourdaloue was one of those who looked with jealousy upon the freedom of the stage, and in particular he raised his voice in the pulpit against Molière's *Tartuffe*: the hypocrite was clever enough to enlist upon his side ecclesiastics of the

<sup>1</sup> Not entirely without success. Moreover, Louise de la Vallière's retirement to a Carmelite convent was probably due, as much as to anything else, to Bourdaloue's continued and earnest exhortations from the pulpit.

<sup>2</sup> *Infra*, bk. v. ch. 5, p. 356.

greatest piety and sincerity, although the famous dramatist had taken special care to except such men from the scope of his satire.<sup>1</sup> From his own point of view, Bourdaloue's argument was not unreasonable. In his sermon for the seventh Sunday after Easter, "On Hypocrisy," preached in 1669, he says that "as true and false piety have a great number of actions in common, and as the external appearances of both are almost wholly similar, the traits with which false religion is depicted harm the true religion." And such is the case when "dramatists place upon the stage and expose to public mockery an imaginary, or even, if you like, a real hypocrite, and, by portraying him, turn into ridicule the holiest things, the dread of the judgments of God, horror against sin, practices in themselves the most praiseworthy and the most Christian."

Perhaps the great distinction between Bossuet and Bourdaloue, so far as regards their style, is that the former was essentially a declaimer in the pulpit, who chose subjects of grandeur, and was happiest in the displays which he made before the grandest audiences; whilst the latter was the author of sermons rather than of declamations, and manifestly valued a victory over the heart of a humble listener more than over the judgment of a man of taste. Full of sense and rational argument, straightforward, reasoning well on the questions which he broached, and rarely touching on anything for which he had not a satisfactory reason at hand, graphic and shrewd in his illustrations from human nature and conduct; clear, antithetical, and harmonious in style, calm and elegant as a rule, and careful not to give too great liberty to his imagination;—these are the qualities for which Bourdaloue is best

<sup>1</sup> In Act i. scene 6 of *Tartuffe*, Cléante says to Orgon: "There are hypocrites in religion as well as pretenders to courage. . . . I know no character more worthy of esteem than the truly devout, nor anything in the world more noble or beautiful than the holy fervour of sincere piety: and so I know nothing more odious than the whited sepulchre of a pretended zealot."



esteemed, and which have caused him sometimes to be set in the very highest place amongst the preachers of the seventeenth century. Let us give the opening of his sermons on the Resurrection, preached before the King :—

“And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” Sire, these words are very different from those which we see commonly engraved on the tombs of men. However powerful they may have been, to what come these magnificent praises which are bestowed upon them, and which we read upon these superb mausoleums which human vanity erects to them? To this inscription: ‘here lies;’ this great man, this conqueror, this man so renowned in the world, is lying under this stone, and buried in the dust, and all his power and all his might cannot drag him away from it. But it is otherwise with Jesus Christ. Scarcely has He been within the bosom of the earth when He leaves it, on the third day, victorious, and wholly shining with light; so that these pious women who came to look for Him, and who, not finding Him, wish to get tidings of Him, learn nothing else except that He is risen and is no longer there. That is, according to the prediction and expression of Isaiah, why ‘the pomp is brought down to the grave.’<sup>2</sup> Whilst the glory of the great men of the age ends in the tomb, it is in the tomb that the glory of this God-man begins. It is there, it is thus to say in the very centre of weakness, that He makes all his strength to shine forth, and in the very arms of death, that He retakes by his own virtue a very happy and immortal life.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matthew, xxviii. 5, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah xiv. 11.

<sup>3</sup> “ ‘L’ange dit aux femmes : Ne craignez point ; vous cherchez Jésus de Nazareth qui a été crucifié : il est ressuscité ; il n’est point ici ; voici le lieu où on l’avait mis.’

“Sire, ces paroles sont bien différentes de celles nous voyons communément gravées sur les tombeaux des hommes. Quelque puissants qu’ils aient été, à quoi se réduisent ces magnifiques éloges qu’on leur donne, et que nous lisons sur ces superbes mausolées que leur érige la vanité humaine ? A cette inscription : *hic jacet* ; ce grand, ce conquérant, cet homme tant vanté dans



His philosophy is well-nigh limited to the repudiation of all intellectual exercise except that which may be necessary for the defence of the faith. His *Agreement of Reason and Faith* goes farther in the discouragement of independent reason than any of his contemporaries ; and this in spite of the fact that he was naturally endowed with a robust and perspicacious logical faculty. Bretonneau,<sup>1</sup> who was the first editor of his sermons, says of him : " He received from nature a fund of reason which, added to a lively and penetrating imagination, enabled him to discover at once in everything whatever it contained of solidity and truth. That was his genuine character, and it was this direct reasoning power which, together with the illumination of faith, formed his guide in all questions of Christian morality and religious mystery, of which it behoved him to treat. The beauty of his sermons consists not exactly in a few well-introduced passages, wherein the orator exhausts his whole art and fire, but in a body of discourse wherein all is sustained, because all is bound together and well arranged."

It would seem as though the critic were here implying a contrast between Bourdaloue and Bossuet, who, by the by, had in his younger days declined the overtures of the Society of Jesus.

le monde, est ici couché sous cette pierre, et enseveli dans la poussière, sans que tout son pouvoir et toute sa puissance l'en puissent tirer. Mais il en va bien autrement à l'égard de Jésus-Christ. A peine a-t-il été enfermé dans le sein de la terre qu'il en sort des le troisième jour, victorieux et tout brillant de lumière ; en sorte que ces femmes dévotes que le viennent chercher, et qui, ne le trouvant pas, en veulent savoir des nouvelles, n'en apprennent rien autre chose, sinon qu'il est ressuscité et qu'il n'est plus là : Voilà, selon la prédiction et l'expression d'Isaïe, ce qui rend son tombeau glorieux : Au lieu donc que la gloire des grands du siècle se termine au tombeau, c'est dans le tombeau que commence la gloire de ce Dieu-homme. C'est là, c'est, pour ainsi dire, dans le centre même de la faiblesse, qu'il fait éclater toute sa force, et jusqu'entre les bras de la mort, qu'il reprend par sa propre vertu une vie bienheureuse et immortelle."

<sup>1</sup> 1707-1734.

## § 2. PHILOSOPHICAL MORALISTS.

Another religious writer of the age of Bossuet, more distinctly than he a disciple of Descartes, a thinker rather than an orator, a metaphysician rather than a preacher, was Nicolas Malebranche,<sup>1</sup> born at Paris, and a father of the Oratory from an early age to the day of his death. M. Victor Cousin speaks of his "angelic style," and indeed the works of Malebranche are distinguished by an elegance and a charm which amply account for the favour in which they have always been held. The Oratory had shown itself a courageous champion of Descartes and of the Jansenists; and Malebranche was the last and greatest of the thinkers whom it produced. In his contempt for the world, in his utter oblivion of the material in presence of the ideal, he was the Kant of his country and generation. As a philosopher he holds a place midway between Bossuet and Spinoza; with all the unwavering faith of the first, and much of the courageous speculation of the second. His *Research after Truth*, published in 1674,<sup>2</sup> is a candid and laborious disquisition into the causes of human error, in the manner of Descartes, although without the latter's breadth of view or boldness of inference. Malebranche was in fact a Christian philosopher, with more than sufficient knowledge to lead him to scepticism, but also with sufficient faith, simplicity, and submissiveness to enable him to remain a good Catholic to the last. In some respects his metaphysical horizon was no wider than that of Bossuet and Fénelon: he honestly believed that, in communion with a personal Deity, man stood face to face with the very source

<sup>1</sup> 1631-1715.

<sup>2</sup> The first volume was published in this year; the others succeeded it at intervals.

of truth, the centre of every manifestation of intellect. But in his definition of the divine ideal, he used terms to which the less adventurous Bossuet found himself unable to subscribe, and which Arnauld attacked with some asperity.

In the opinion of Malebranche the flesh is the origin, or at all events the medium of all sin ; the soul of man is more nearly allied to God than it is to his own body ; the senses of man do not inform him as to the real nature of phenomenal existences, but only as to their relations with the body. Our body, again, is that which alienates us from God ; original sin was the divorcing of the soul from God and its remarriage with the body. Man had thus become corrupted from the form in which God created him : and whereas his soul ought to stand aloof from the senses, and to sit in judgment upon their evidence, it was more apt to receive their testimony under the title of science. In short, science was the product of the union of spirit and body ; religion was the fruit of the spirit's commerce with God. Here Malebranche parted from his master Descartes, and chose religion as the path whereby his research of truth might attain its end. Descartes had gone on the other tack, not indeed repudiating truth in religion, but assuming that God had in the beginning ordained that man should imbibe truth through his senses, and that the union of body and soul was not adulterous but legitimate.

As a consequence of these initial positions, Malebranche held that the spirit, in its quest of truth, must set aside all testimony derived from the senses alone. To the vice of phenomenal inductions he traced all the errors which the human judgment had incurred. "If men had been specially enlightened," he maintained, "universal approbation would be an argument for it, but it is entirely otherwise." The reason of the individual is therefore brought face to face with God ; from Him alone its inquiries must be made, and by Him alone can clear and distinct ideas be implanted in the



mind. It is for this revelation of truth that we must strive and wait: strive by prayer, and wait in humility and with suspended judgment.

The consequence is evident. The truth of Christianity, to take a crucial test, must not be accepted upon the evidence of tradition and ecclesiastical history, but must be received only after a fresh revelation direct from God to the soul of each. Authority and Catholicity disappear before such a doctrine, and the theory of Malebranche is fatal, in particular, to the orthodox Roman Catholic creed. In fact, whilst Malebranche had the mind of a metaphysician, the method and the processes of a true philosopher, his conclusions were warped by the foregone conclusion that his religion was true, whatever philosophy might teach him; but if he ended by an inference the reverse of philosophic, his *Research* none the less proves the fervour and refinement of his natural genius.

Amongst the best of Malebranche's remaining works are a volume of *Metaphysical Conversations*, a *Treatise on Nature and Grace*, *Discussions on Metaphysics and Religion*, and a *Treatise on the Love of God*. Judge of his style and of the suggestive manner of his treatment of whatever subject he took in hand, by a short passage on amiability of character, taken from a treatise on the *Duties of Equals*.

"In order to be loved we must render ourselves lovable. It is an unjust and ridiculous pretension to exact friendship; and those who are not loved ought to attribute it to none save themselves. If justice is not always done to merit, inasmuch as it is not always recognised, and men commonly judge it amiss, every one is alive to amiable qualities, and they who possess them never lack friends.

"The merit of others effaces our own; and when we do them justice it is as though we did ourselves wrong. We cannot extol them without debasing ourselves; and when we put them beneath us we imagine that we are the greater for it. But when we love any one we do ourselves no wrong. It would



seem, on the contrary, that the soul is expanded by imparting itself to the hearts of others, and that it clothes itself and adorns itself with the glory which surrounds its friends. Thus we always make ourselves loved so long as we render ourselves lovable; but we do not always make ourselves esteemed, whatever merit we may have.

"What, then, are the qualities which render us lovable? Nothing is easier than to discover them. It is not the possession of wit, of knowledge, of good looks, a straight and shapely person, birth, riches, or even virtues; it is not exactly the whole of these, for one may feel an aversion for the man who possesses all these estimable qualities. What then? It is to appear in such a manner that others conclude they will be happy in our company. . . . They who would be loved, and who have much wit, should impart it to others. Let them lay so much stress on the good things others say in their presence that each shall, in their company, be pleased with himself. Let not him who has knowledge preach like a master of the truths whereof he is convinced; but let him have the art of insensibly causing the light to shine in the minds of those who listen to him, so that each may find himself enlightened without the shame of having been his disciple. He who is liberal is not amiable if he extols himself, or boasts of his liberalities. In fact, he makes his favours a reproach to him to whom he has shown them, by the confusion wherewith he covers him. But he who has imparted to others his wit and his knowledge, as well as his money and his greatness, without any one perceiving it, and without drawing from it any advantage, necessarily gains all hearts by this virtuous liberality—the only liberality, I am bold to say, which is virtuous and charitable, the only liberality which is generous and sincere. For all other liberality is but a simple effect of self-love, all other is interested, or at least very ill regulated."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Pour se faire aimer, il faut se rendre aimable. C'est une prétention injuste et ridicule que d'exiger de l'amitié; et ceux qui ne se font point aimer ne s'en doivent prendre qu'à eux-mêmes. Si on ne rend pas toujours justice au mérite, à cause qu'on ne le connoît pas et qu'ordinairement on en juge mal, tout le monde est sensible aux qualités aimables, et ceux qui les possèdent ne manquent jamais d'amis.

"Le mérite des autres efface le nôtre; et quand on leur rend justice il

In an age of moralists and moral maxims we have here a La Rochefoucauld with an intimate knowledge of human nature at its best; without cynicism, but with abundant shrewdness and perspicacity. The philosophy of Malebranche is better in practice than in theory.

Side by side with this Christian philosopher, intimate with him and with all the eminent preachers of his age, and yielding to none in the sincerity and loftiness of his views, our attention is arrested by a Christian moralist. Born at Dourdan, Jean de la Bruyère<sup>1</sup> began life as a *conseiller-trésorier* at Caen; but Bossuet came to know him, recognised his merits, and introduced him to the capital. In Paris he became tutor to Louis de Bourbon, grandson of

semble qu'on se fasse tort. On ne peut les élever sans se rabaisser soi-même; et lorsqu'on les met au-dessous de soi, on croit en être plus grand. Mais, quand on aime les gens, on ne se fait aucun tort. Il semble, au contraire, que l'âme s'étende en se répandant dans les cœurs, et qu'elle se revête et se pare de la gloire qui environne ses amis. Ainsi, on se fait toujours aimer, pourvu qu'on se rende aimable; mais on ne se fait pas toujours estimer, quelque mérite qu'on ait.

“Quelles sont donc les qualités qui nous rendent aimables? Rien n'est plus facile que de les découvrir. Ce n'est point avoir de l'esprit, de la science, un beau visage, un corps bien droit et bien formé, de la qualité, des richesses, ni même de la vertu; ce n'est point précisément tout cela, car on peut avoir de l'aversion pour celui qui possède toutes ces qualités estimables. Quoi donc? C'est de paroître tel que les autres se persuadent qu'avec nous ils seront contents. . . . Ceux qui veulent se faire aimer, et qui ont bien de l'esprit, en doivent faire part aux autres. Qu'ils fassent si bien valoir les bonnes choses que les autres disent en leur présence, qu'avec eux chacun soit content de soi-même. Que celui qui a de la science n'enseigne point en maître les vérités dont il est convaincu; mais qu'il ait le secret de faire naître insensiblement la lumière dans l'esprit de ceux qui l'écoutent; de sorte que chacun s'en trouve éclairé sans la honte d'avoir été son disciple. Celui qui est libéral n'est point aimable s'il s'élève ou se vante de ses libéralités. En effet, il reproche ses faveurs à celui à qui il les fait par la confusion dont il le couvre. Mais celui qui fait part aux autres de son esprit et de sa science, aussi bien que de son argent et de sa grandeur, sans que personne s'en aperçoive et sans qu'il en tire aucun avantage, gagne nécessairement tous les cœurs par cette vertueuse libéralité; seule, disje, vertueuse et charitable, seule généreuse et sincère. Car toute autre libéralité n'est qu'un pur effet de l'amour-propre est intéressée ou du moins fort mal réglée.”



the greatest of the Condés, and in the hôtel of that powerful family he found a residence to the day of his death, in addition to a pension of a thousand crowns. At the beginning of the year 1688 he published a translation of the *Characters* of Theophrastus,<sup>1</sup> from the Greek, to which he prefixed a short essay on his original, and to which he added his own *Characters or Morals of the Age*, observations on the society amidst which he lived, inserted under the name of an ancient author, who was less acute and less complete and elaborate than La Bruyère himself. Up to 1694 eight editions of the *Characters* appeared, and in every edition there were added some new ones. The original had only 418 characters, the second 762, and then they increased to 925, 997, 1073, and 1119. In his first chapter, *On Mind*, the author discourses about all the means ever invented by men to obtain influence, honours, power; and also in what men are great and generous; in the second, *On personal Merit*, he sketches the different kinds of merits and vanities, and amplifies his own saying, "Of many men only the name is of any value." The third chapter, *On Women*, is a gallery of feminine portraits in full length, and often too faithfully delineated, so that the generality leaves a painful impression on the mind. The next, by a natural transition, is *On the Heart*, and here love and friendship—placed by our moralist far above love—are treated. Then comes *On Society and Conversation*, in which all the faults and follies of mankind are exposed, and of which the conclusion is "The wise man sometimes avoids the world for fear of becoming weary." The sixth chapter, *On Wealth*, is perhaps the most masterly of all; the *parvenus* are depicted in indelible traits, above all the self-sufficient Giton, whilst the terrible picture of Phédon closes the chapter. His next, *On the Town*, is nearly a continuous raillery on the citizens who wish to ape the

vices and splendour of the great, whilst his chapter *On the Court* rails at the courtiers and their manners, ridicules even Versailles, and concludes with "A healthy mind receives at court a taste for solitude and retirement." The ninth chapter, *On the Great*, proves the boldness of La Bruyère by the unvarnished portraits which he has etched for all times. He says, amongst other things, that among the great "is hidden a malignant and corrupt sap under the outward covering of politeness. The people have scarcely any knowledge, and the great have no soul. Must I choose? I do not hesitate, I wish to belong to the people." The following, *On the Sovereign and the Republic*, advises to "think one's native country the best of all, and submit to its government;" but "is the flock made for the shepherd, or the shepherd for the flock?" Of course the whole concludes with a fulsome sketch of Louis XIV., without which I suppose the other truths would not have been allowed to pass. The other chapters *On Man*, *On Judgments*, *On Fashion*, and *On some Customs*, sketch the natural inclinations of man, his influence on society, and the reflex influence of society on him. He defines fashion "a tyrant of whom the action extends to all that concerns taste, manner of living, health, and even conscience." How well that last word brings before our eyes the courtly hypocrites and zealots of Louis XIV. La Bruyère discusses also some grammatical questions and the adoption and rejection of some words, in his chapter *On Certain Customs*; and it is interesting to observe how our moralist regrets the loss of many words, which are at present regularly used in French. The two last chapters, *On the Pulpit*, and *On Sceptics*, treat of religion, its influence on mankind, and contain also a refutation of atheism, and an attempt to prove the existence of a Deity. The last two lines are as follows:—"If people do not enjoy these Characters, I am astonished at it; and if people do enjoy them, I am also astonished at it."



In 1693 La Bruyère was admitted to the Academy ; and tradition records of this event two or three self-contradictory anecdotes, which, however near they may be to the truth, clearly do the distinguished moralist a great injustice. It is stated, in the first place, that much opposition was displayed on the part of the Academicians against the candidate. The statement, little as we might be surprised at such a display of feeling in respect of an author who had been warned by a friend, M. de Malezieux, that by publishing his *Characters* he would attract many readers and many enemies, is in thorough contrast with the expressions made use of by La Bruyère himself in his introductory address at the Academy. "I valued your choice so highly," he says, "that I did not venture to offend, not even to infringe upon its independence by an unfortunate . . . solicitation. . . . You have granted it to me, gentlemen, and in so gracious a manner, with so unanimous a consent, that I owe it and consider it as due to your munificence alone. There is neither position, nor credit, nor wealth, nor titles, nor authority, nor favour, which could have influenced you in this choice ; I have none of all these : everything was wanting to me ; a work which has had some little success by its singularity, and whereof false, I say false and malignant applications might have injured me with persons less just and less enlightened than you, has been the only mediation which I have employed, and which you have received." He also declares in this address that "the glory of a sovereign consists in being beloved by his people ;" and intones a pæan of praise in honour of peace. In La Bruyère's words there seems to have been an ironical under-current, which is rather satirical upon the custom of soliciting votes ; in any case the Academy decided that henceforward no introductory address should be delivered before having been submitted to a committee of its members. Several Academicians protested in the newspaper *Le Mercure*

against some of La Bruyère's remarks ; the latter replied, and published his speech with a rather satirical preface, and died suddenly, amidst these bickerings, in 1696.

An epigram<sup>1</sup> at La Bruyère's expense is laid to the charge of one or other of his colleagues, which I am loth to believe was written for him. Many men have entered the Academy with an epigram pinned to their coat-tails ; but this has been applied to one or two since La Bruyère's time, and, I doubt not, was applied to others before him.

The perversity which has thus made light of La Bruyère's dignity is matched by the inconsistency of his critics in successive generations. It was as a satirist that he was chiefly admired or disliked by his contemporaries, who recognised amongst themselves, or thought they recognised, the originals of many of his portraits, and perhaps neglected what he would have had them most regard for that upon which he placed least stress. In the age which came after he was regarded more nearly in his truest and best light, as a moralist ; whilst recent generations have been content as a rule to consider the manner rather than the matter of his work, extolling the writer and the artist above the moralist and the satirist.<sup>2</sup> For no doubt he was both, and no doubt also he excelled more in his characters or portraits of men, and in the earnestness with which he drew serious lessons from what he saw and heard, than in the style with which he expressed himself. His style was good, but it was not in the grand manner of Bossuet, Fléchier, and Malebranche. He resembled all these in his refinement, his lofty moral sense, his protest against the recklessness of thought and action which distinguished the age of Louis XIV. ; but he was not an orator. According to Boileau, indeed, who was

<sup>1</sup> "Quand La Bruyère se présente,      Pour faire un nombre de quarante  
Pourquoi faut-il crier haro ?      Ne fallait-il pas un zéro !"

<sup>2</sup> The observation is M. Charles Asselineau's, a recent editor of La Bruyère.

only ten years older than La Bruyère, he exhibited signs of the decline of the Augustan period; and it was not altogether either jealousy or the severity of a critic which dictated the judgment. For though the *Characters* of La Bruyère are one mass of moral maxims and shrewd observations, comparable with Pascal for their lofty tone, and with La Rochefoucauld for their force, the literary value of the work suffers by juxtaposition with the finished essays of its author's more eloquent contemporaries.

Yet La Bruyère knew the secret of his art, and it is only in external form and rhetorical polish that his style can be placed second to that of Bossuet and Bourdaloue. Half-a-dozen of his axioms are sufficient, when well digested and carried out, to train a powerful writer. "The whole spirit of authorship," he says, "consists in defining well and painting well." And again: "Amongst all the expressions which can present any one of our thoughts, there is but one which is the right one;" or at all events, which is the best. "There is a point of perfection in art, as there is of goodness and ripeness in nature: he who feels and loves it has perfect taste; he who feels it not, and who loves something beneath or beyond it, has faulty taste. . . . Moses, Homer, Plato, Virgil, Horace, are above other writers only by their expressions and their images; you must express the truth in order to write naturally, forcibly, delicately." And the author who has this high conception of his art, and who repudiates for the exercise of his talent any topic which is not consistent with the true—that is, with the just and honourable—"demands from men a greater and rarer success than praise, or even rewards, namely, that he should render them better." Such is La Bruyère's theory of authorship. Is it a theory consistent with the highest artistic principles? Many have said not—that art cannot take cognisance of the artist's desire to make men better by his works, except perhaps in the sense

which identifies goodness with intellectual elevation and a refined taste. From an independent point of view it would seem possible that the literary decline and moral degradation of France, which began to manifest itself towards the close of Louis XIV.'s reign, might have been less extensive if La Bruyère's fellow-countrymen had more generally adopted his theory.



## CHAPTER V.

## § 1. DECLINE OF THE AGE OF LOUIS XIV.

AMONGST the last words of Bossuet he is reported to have said : " I foresee that strong minds may be discredited, not for any abhorrence of their opinions, but because men will regard everything with indifference, except pleasures and business." The prediction was amply verified. At the moment when it was uttered, early in the eighteenth century, the social and literary causes which were to bring it about were already actively at work ; and Bossuet himself, directly and indirectly, had done much to set them in motion. To him, more than to any one else, was due the triumph of form over matter in the theological and moral literature of the age ; and the spirit of La Bruyère was as much a reaction against as a decline from the sterile eloquence of his predecessors. With Bossuet and his school the writer displaced the philosopher and the teacher : La Bruyère philosophised and taught, but all that he obtained was to be handed down to posterity merely as a writer of the second order. An age of indifference succeeded an age of exquisiteness of form as naturally as temporary dimness of sight succeeds to dazzling splendour. In another and more special direction Bossuet had contributed to produce that which he lamented. The revocation of the edict of Nantes, the persecution, massacre, and flight of the Protestants, were disastrous to the country in more than one way. The attempt to reduce religious opinion to a dead level

of uniformity could only result, as it has resulted over and over again, in uniform indifference: the more nearly the attempt has ever succeeded, the more nearly has the country upon which the experiment has been tried approached to scepticism and unbelief. Moreover, the actual decrease of the population, and the loss sustained by the intellectual and industrial resources of France, from this short-sighted oppression, had become painfully manifest even before the death of Bossuet. The Memoirs of the Intendants, forty-two volumes, wherefrom Boulainvilliers prepared a work on the *Condition of France*, published in 1727, bear witness to the conspicuousness of this amongst the other causes of national disaster. "War, the mortality (of 1693), the billeting and continual marches of soldiery, the militia, the taxes, and the flight of the Huguenots"—to which we may add the absence from their estates of the nobles, their pecuniary embarrassments and gradual diminution—"have ruined this land." Such is the confession or complaint of intendant after intendant in every district of France.

The material causes of misery, if not the most powerful, produced the most manifest results. The taxation of the people had grown oppressive and unwieldy in the last degree, and the king's ministers were either callous to the complaints which reached them, or tried in vain to stem the evil. Vauban, Fénelon, de Boisguilbert, and others, strove manfully to introduce reforms, even though it were but in the incidence and collection of the taxes; but their efforts were at once rendered nugatory by the obstinacy and selfishness of Louis. In 1707 Vauban published a volume entitled *Projet de Dîme Royale*, dealing with the subject, and presented it to the king.<sup>1</sup> The latter, surrounded as he was by a crowd of sycophants and

<sup>1</sup> At the same time (1707) Augustin Le Pesant de Boisguilbert published in Paris his *Factum de la France*, in which he proposed to substitute a sort of income-tax for the harassing poll-tax. It was calculated that the change would have quite trebled the yield to the treasury; and yet de Boisguilbert's book shared the fate of Vauban's, and its author was sent into exile. He

interested advisers, ordered the obnoxious book to be placed in the pillory; and its author survived only six weeks<sup>1</sup> this brutal return for half-a-century of faithful services. At Querci, Périgord, and elsewhere, the overburdened populace broke into open revolt. France was, in fact, absolutely ruined, and already there were those who perceived that nothing but a revolution would save her. The effect of war, poverty, exile, disease, and famine, upon the population of the country was disastrous in the extreme. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century the census fell from twenty-two or twenty-three millions to not more than nineteen millions. In the quarter of a century preceding the year 1715, it has been estimated<sup>2</sup> that the population had diminished by one-third. And amidst all this misery and wretchedness the court maintained its brilliancy, its sumptuousness, its virtual indifference to everything outside the daily routine of pleasure and etiquette.

## § 2. FÉNELON.

Amongst the men who laboured to rescue their country from its sorry plight, the one with whom we have most to do was François de Salignac de la Motte Fénelon,<sup>3</sup> a native of Querci. Entering the church at an early age, and being distinguished for his abilities and persuasive talents, he was sent in 1686 on a mission to the Protestants of Poitou and Saintonge, at the same time that Bourdaloue went to Languedoc, Fléchier to Brittany, and others to other parts of the kingdom. These missions were held at the time to have been successful ;

published a refutation of Vauban's book, and was the writer of several other financial and economical works : a *Détail de la France*, first published in Holland in 1695, and republished in Paris in 1707, and, of course, forbidden ; a *Dissertation sur les Richesses l'argent et les tributs*, etc.

<sup>1</sup> So says Saint-Simon. Vauban was, however, seventy-four years old.

<sup>2</sup> H. Taine, *L'Ancien Régime*, book v. ch. 1.

<sup>3</sup> 1651-1715.

and undoubtedly the work of conciliation was far more consonant with Fénelon's disposition than the policy of persecution which commended itself to many of his contemporaries. On his return we hear of him as amongst the friends and prudent counsellors of Madame de Maintenon, whom he gradually endeavoured to employ as a lever upon the mind of the king. The young Duke of Burgundy, the grandson of Louis XIV.,<sup>1</sup> became his pupil;<sup>2</sup> and Fénelon trained him with such good results as to have induced many a regret amongst the Frenchmen of a later generation that he did not live to occupy the throne. The views, as well as the acts of Fénelon, were bold; his ability for the part which he undertook may be questioned, though the difficulty, if not the utter impossibility of his task, cannot be overrated. In one of his letters to Madame de Maintenon he speaks of their common political conduct as the "siege of the king," in order to govern him as he will be governed. The mainspring of Fénelon's actions is to be found in a zealous love for his fellow-men, which he exhibited, it may be, with a certain lack of prudence and worldly wisdom, but which was undoubtedly the genuine basis of his public career. "I love my family," he said, "better than myself, my country better than my family, humanity better than my country." And it is precisely in this order that he commended himself to the affection and esteem of his contemporaries, and of posterity. It may readily be conceived that this disposition of mind was little in unison with that of the king and his court, who had never been wont to give much consideration to the welfare of the masses. To them the natural relation between people and monarch was much the same as the relation of source and reservoir; so long as the nation could be made to pay whatever taxes were demanded from it, and the army as fast as they were thin-

<sup>1</sup> 1682-1712



all was considered as going well. But Fénelon represented a new order of things ; he was unconsciously the progenitor of Voltaire and Rousseau ; he breathed the spirit of a reaction which was the necessary consequence of the splendid and selfish royal dynasty ; destined to advance slowly and to exert its influence with difficulty, but destined also to transfer the sovereignty of France from a king to a democracy.

Fénelon was dissatisfied with the apparent futility of his indirect efforts to impress Louis with a sense of the gravity of the situation, and he adopted a bold course for the more speedy attainment of his end. In the year 1693—the year of a widespread and disastrous famine in France—the king received an anonymous letter, “which in the opinion of the writer, ought to be the *Mene, Tekel, Upharsin* of the feast of Balshazzar, and which at all events sounded in the ears of Louis as a terrible discord amidst the perpetual hymns of Versailles.”<sup>1</sup> It began by protesting the author’s respect and attachment to the king, and then proceeded to paint in vivid colours the actual condition of the country. It acknowledged the justice and loftiness of the monarch’s mind, and then proceeded to reproach him with his selfish pursuit of pleasure and glory, with his toleration of unjust ministers, with his unjustifiable encroachment upon the territory of his neighbours, with the impoverishment of France for the maintenance of courtly splendour and pleasure. The people died of hunger, the fields were suffered to lie fallow, commerce languished, national bankruptcy was imminent.

“The whole of France is but one great hospital, desolated and without provisions ; the people who have loved you so much, begin to lose their love, their confidence, even their respect. Popular agitations, unknown for so long, are becoming frequent. Paris herself is not free from them. The magistrates are compelled to tolerate the insolence of the mutinous secretly, and to supply

<sup>1</sup> Henri Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. xiv. 186.

money for their pacification. You are reduced to the lamentable necessity of either leaving sedition unpunished, or massacring the people whom you have driven to despair . . . and who perish, day after day, of diseases sprung from famine. Whilst they lack bread, you yourself lack money, and you will not see the extremity to which you are brought. . . . God holds his hand outstretched above you, but he is slow to strike, because He pities a prince who has been all his life besieged by flatterers, and because, moreover, your enemies are also his.<sup>1</sup> But He will know well how to distinguish his just cause from yours, which is not so, and to humiliate in order to convert you ; for you will not be a Christian save in humiliation. You do not love God ; you do not even fear Him except with the fear of a slave ; it is hell, not God, which you fear. Your religion consists wholly in superstitions, in petty superficial observances. You refer everything to yourself, as though you were the God of the world."

He alludes to the timidity of the best of the king's advisers, and exclaims :—

"That which they ought to tell you and do not, is this: You must make peace, and expiate by this degradation all the glory which you have made your idol. You must restore at once to your enemies, in order to save the state, conquests which you cannot retain without injustice."

It required the moral courage of a Fénelon to write this, even anonymously ; but it was clearly not calculated to produce the effect which its author desired. As Madame de Maintenon said, in a letter to Cardinal de Noailles, it served "rather to irritate and discourage the king than to make him retrace his steps." Nothing effectual was done to overcome the crisis : tax after tax was still imposed or aggravated ; and, as Voltaire cynically puts it, "men died of misery to the tune of *Te Deums*." Louis does not seem to have been aware of the authorship of Fénelon's letter ; or if he was aware of it he concealed the fact, which is not very probable. Shortly after its receipt, early in 1695, he nominated the successful

<sup>1</sup> The Protestants to wit.

tutor of his grandson archbishop of Cambrai. The honour was perhaps intended only as a preface to disgrace ; for the king, who could not but have perceived that Fénelon was not in harmony with the sentiments of his court, took occasion to engage him in conversation, and to elicit his candid opinions. When it was over he said to those who surrounded him, "I have just been speaking with the most refined and most fanciful man in my kingdom." That was the manner in which Louis was wont to pronounce the disgrace of his courtiers ; and Fénelon understood it. But what the monarch had begun it remained for Bossuet to complete. Fénelon had for some time been inclining towards that mysticism in religion of which Madame de la Mothe-Guyon was the boldest exponent, but for which his ardent admiration of François de Sales was quite sufficient, in his case, to account. Bossuet attacked him with his wonted severity. He called upon Fénelon to condemn the writings of Madame Guyon, and to give his assent to a work which he was about to publish, under the title of an *Instruction on the Conditions of Prayer*, in which he ventured to mark out the boundaries between true piety and dangerous illusions. Fénelon declined, and published on his own part an *Explanation of the Maxims of the Saints upon the Inner Life*.<sup>1</sup> His aged adversary was beside himself with horror at the appearance of this book ; rushed off to the king, and besought his pardon "for not having earlier revealed to him the fanaticism of his episcopal colleague." The king listened to Bossuet, and so did public opinion. Fénelon, hopelessly disgraced, was ordered to retire to his diocese, and pressure was put upon Pope Innocent XII. to procure a condemnation of the *Maxims*, which was in fact pronounced from Rome upwards of two years after the publication of the book. Fénelon lived long enough to regain his position in the general esteem of his fellow-countrymen ; but the king was never reconciled to him.

<sup>1</sup> 1697.

The picture which an eminent historian<sup>1</sup> draws of this conspicuous figure in the history and literature of France is so vivid that I cannot deny myself the pleasure of transcribing it:—

“To recall the impression produced by the first sight of Fénelon’s face is to describe Fénelon completely. Never was a man more fully revealed by his physiognomy; the fine proportions of his leading features and of his whole person, the fire of his eyes tempered by an incomparable sweetness, his serious and smiling mouth, half opened as though to permit his soul to breathe over all that surrounds him, exercised in his presence an almost irresistible seduction, inspired men with a powerful sympathy, and women with a pure and impassioned attraction which seems to belong not to the world. We feel that, in this tender nature, the heart inherited all that was discarded from the senses by the vows of his profession; but this is not the hopeless victory of Pascal: the struggle against nature has left but feeble traces on this radiant face; scarcely does a vestige of melancholy mingle a shadow with the serene joy which breathes upon it. Spinoza knew only by the stern understanding the joy of the soul which possesses God; Fénelon knows it by the feelings. . . . A comparison has often been drawn between the ‘eagle of Meaux’ (Bossuet) and the ‘swan of Cambrai,’ (Fénelon)—the one impresses, the other softens; the one inspires fear of God, the other, confidence in God; the one, even while repudiating the sectarian spirit of the Jansenists, clung to the harsh morality of Port-Royal; the other, not less above suspicion in the purity of his life, teaches less sombre doctrines. He has no hatred of the present life: he does not say, like Pascal, that the ‘I’ is worthy of hatred; he would have us bear with ourselves, as we bear with our neighbour. . . . ‘Enlarge your heart!’ he cries. In him everything breathes that fulness and happy harmony of life which the poets of the Middle Age expressed by the fine word *liesse*, and which they did not separate from valour and virtue. Never did the broad path of Christianity find such an apostle.”

<sup>1</sup> Henri Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. xiv. p. 299. Let me once and for all acknowledge the great obligations which I owe to that masterly history.



In addition to the works already mentioned, Fénelon wrote, early in life, a number of *Dialogues on Eloquence*, not published until after his death ; and a *Treatise on the Existence of God*—his argument being based chiefly on the beauty and system of nature, and on the analogy, effect to cause, from the visible to the invisible, from the provable to that which is not capable of physical proof. His *Treatise on the Education of Girls* was written to assist the Duchess de Beauvilliers in the training of her daughters. The *Treatise on the Ministry of Pastors* was a defence of the apostolic succession of the ministry, and its good reception by the authorities led to his being selected for the mission to Poitou. His *Fables* and *Dialogues of the Dead*, written after his appointment, in 1689, as the tutor of the young Duke of Burgundy, were composed expressly for his pupil ; and he did not hesitate to condemn by this medium the “barbarous governments where there are no laws except the pleasure of a single man,” and to declare to the grandson of Louis XIV. that “all wars are civil wars,” and that “each individual owes infinitely more to the human race, which is the grand country, than to the particular country in which he is born.”

But the work by which Fénelon is most widely known outside the pale of political history is his prose-epic *Telemachus*, also composed mainly on behalf of his pupil, and not published until after the archbishop's exile from the court, in 1699, and then only through the faithlessness of a servant. It was of set purpose that Fénelon chose a prose form for this poem ; he rebelled against the trammels of versification, and though no doubt he could have written either blank verse or rhyme elegantly, he would have done it laboriously, and the result would probably have been less satisfactory than what we now possess. The plan of the book is simple : it records the adventures of Prince Telemachus, in search of his father Ulysses, journeying in the company of his friend Mentor,

who is really Minerva, the goddess of wisdom; and it is written upon the model of the *Odyssey*. The author's opinions on government, education, worship, and the like, are expressed clearly and boldly; and though he distinctly states that he had only written it to amuse and instruct his noble pupil, it is impossible to read the book and not to perceive that it abounds with manifest applications to the circumstances of France at the time. Many critics have stated that though it contains political and administrative views in direct contradiction to the government of Louis XIV., it does not directly allude to, and does not attack it in a satirical manner. I do not see how the words "amuse and instruct" are in contradiction with such allusions, but I prefer to let the French historian speak, to whom I am already so greatly indebted: "Some have chosen to deny the allusions of *Télémaque*, but they abound; the whole book, so to say, consists of allusions, and this was inevitable and involuntary. Sesostris, Idomeneus more particularly; Idomeneus, trained in ideas of pride and haughtiness, too much absorbed in the details of affairs, neglecting the cultivation of the land in order to give himself up to splendid architecture, is Louis XIV.; Tyre is Holland, Protesilas is Louvois; the coalition against Idomeneus is the league of Augsburg; the mountain-castles are the towns on the Rhine and in Belgium, 'fortresses built on the land of others.' Certain discourses of Mentor to Idomeneus precisely recall the anonymous letter to Louis XIV. On the other hand, the philosophic excuses which Mentor gives for the faults of kings apply equally to Louis. Again when Mentor says to Telemachus: 'The gods will expect more from you than from Idomeneus, because you have known the truth from your youth, and you have never been exposed to the seductions of a too great prosperity,' this is evidently Fénelon speaking to the grandson of the great king."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. xiv. p. 310

In the following description of Tyre and the Phœnicians, judge whether Holland and the Dutch, as they existed a couple of centuries ago, were not in the writer's mind :—

“Unfavourable winds detained us for some time at Tyre. I took advantage of this sojourn to obtain information on the manners of the Phœnicians, so celebrated amongst all known nations. I wondered at the fortunate situation of this great town, which is upon an island, surrounded by the sea. The neighbouring coast is delightful by its fertility, by the exquisite fruits which it yields, by the number of towns and villages almost continuous, and again by the sweetness of its climate ; for the mountains shield this coast from the burning south winds : it is refreshed by the north wind, which blows from the sea-coast. . . . Here the lowing cattle are to be seen grazing, the bleating sheep with their tender lambs skipping in the grass : here flow a thousand streams of clear water. Beneath these pastures, again, you may see the foot of the mountain, which is like a garden : spring and autumn reign there together, mingling flowers and fruits. Never has the pestiferous breath of the south, drying and scorching all, nor the harsh north wind, dared to efface the bright colours which adorn this garden. It is close to this beautiful coast that the isle on which the town of Tyre is built rises from the sea. This great town seems to float upon the waters, and to be the queen of the sea. Merchants come thither from all parts of the world, and its inhabitants are themselves the most famous merchants in the universe. When you enter this town you imagine at first that it is the common town of the nations and the centre of their commerce. It has two great quays like two arms which stretch into the sea, and embrace a vast harbour, into which the winds cannot enter. In this harbour you see as it were a forest of masts of ships ; and these ships are so numerous that you can hardly perceive the sea which bears them. All the citizens busy themselves in commerce, and their great wealth never sets them against the labour necessary to increase it. You see there on all sides the fine linen of Egypt, and the twice-dipped Tyrian ~~linen~~ of a wonderful splendour ; this double dye is so bright  
it : it is used for fine wools, which are

adorned with an embroidery of gold and silver. The Phœnicians have the commerce of all nations as far as the Straits of Cadiz, and they have even penetrated into the vast ocean which surrounds the whole earth. They have also made long voyages on the Red Sea; and it is by this route that they go to search for the unknown isles of gold, perfumes, and animals of various kinds which are not seen elsewhere. I could not sate my eyes with the magnificent spectacle of this great town where everything was in motion. I did not see here, as in the towns of Greece, idle and inquisitive men going in quest of news into the public squares, or gazing at the strangers who arrive in the harbour. The men are occupied in unloading their vessels, in carrying or selling their merchandise, in arranging their warehouses, and in keeping an exact account of what is due to them from foreign merchants. The women never cease spinning their wool, or working designs in embroidery, or folding the rich stuffs." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Les vents contraires nous retinrent assez longtemps à Tyr. Je profitai de ce séjour pour connaître les mœurs des Phéniciens, si célèbres dans toutes les nations connues. J'admirais l'heureuse situation de cette grande ville, qui est au milieu de la mer dans une île. La côte voisine est délicieuse par sa fertilité, par les fruits exquis qu'elle porte, par le nombre de villes et de villages qui se touchent presque; enfin par la douceur de son climat: car les montagnes mettent cette côte à l'abri des vents brûlants du midi; elle est rafraîchie par le vent du nord qui souffle du côté de la mer. . . . C'est là qu'on voit errer les taureaux qui mugissent, les brebis qui bêlent avec leurs tendres agneaux bondissant sur l'herbe: là coulent mille ruisseaux d'une eau claire. Enfin, on voit au-dessous de ces pâturages le pied de la montagne, qui est comme un jardin: le printemps et l'automne y règnent ensemble pour y joindre les fleurs et les fruits. Jamais ni le souffle empesté du midi, qui sèche et qui brûle tout, ni le rigoureux aquilon, n'ont osé effacer les vives couleurs qui ornent ce jardin.

"C'est auprès de cette belle côte que s'élève dans la mer l'île où est bâtie la ville de Tyr. Cette grande ville semble nager au-dessus des eaux, et être la reine de la mer. Les marchands y abordent de toutes les parties du monde, et ses habitants sont eux-mêmes les plus fameux marchands qu'il y ait dans l'univers. Quand on entre dans cette ville, on croit d'abord que ce n'est point une ville qui appartienne à un peuple particulier, mais qu'elle est la ville commune de tous les peuples, et le centre de leur commerce. Elle a deux grands môles semblables à deux bras qui s'avancent dans la mer, et qui embrassent un vaste port où les vents ne peuvent entrer. Dans ce port on voit une forêt de mâts de navires; et ces navires sont si nombreux qu'à



This is a perfect picture of Holland, and of Amsterdam, with the exception of "the mountains," which do not exist there.

### § 3. MASSILLON.

A pulpit orator of the eighteenth rather than of the seventeenth century, who, though of the school of Bossuet, and of the later days of Louis XIV., was only thirty-one years old when Voltaire was born, and stood, before his death, in direct contrast with the innovating spirit of the younger generation, Jean Baptiste Massillon<sup>1</sup> seems to demand our attention before we proceed to gather up the final threads of the Augustan age ; the more so, as during the last twenty-five years of his long life he resided continually in his diocese. He was another of the noble spirits cherished and ripened in the seclusion of the Oratory, which he entered in his nineteenth year : another instance of the precocious talent so amply mani-

on découvrir la mer qui les porte. Tous les citoyens s'appliquent au commerce, et leurs grandes richesses ne les dégoûtent jamais du travail nécessaire pour les augmenter. On y voit de tous côtés le fin lin d'Égypte, et la pourpre tyrienne deux fois teinte, d'un éclat merveilleux : cette double teinture est si vive, que le temps ne peut l'effacer : on s'en sert pour des laines fines qu'on rehausse d'une broderie d'or et d'argent. Les Phéniciens ont le commerce de tous les peuples jusqu'au détroit de Gades, et ils ont même pénétré dans le vaste Océan qui environne toute la terre. Ils ont fait aussi de longues navigations sur la mer Rouge ; et c'est par ce chemin qu'ils vont chercher dans des îles inconnues de l'or, des parfums, et divers animaux qu'on ne voit point ailleurs.

"Je ne pouvais rassasier mes yeux du spectacle magnifique de cette grande ville où tout était en mouvement. Je n'y voyais point, comme dans les villes de la Grèce, des hommes oisifs et curieux, qui vont chercher des nouvelles dans la place publique, ou regarder les étrangers qui arrivent sur le port. Les hommes sont occupés à décharger leurs vaisseaux, à transporter leurs marchandises ou à les vendre, à ranger leurs magasins, et à tenir un compte exact de ce qui leur est dû par les négociants étrangers. Les femmes ne cessent

« de filer des laines, ou de faire des dessins de broderie, ou de plier les

<sup>1</sup> 1663-1742.

fested in the sacred annals of his time. He preached with great success, first at Montpellier, then at Paris, where he showed himself well able to continue, before the court of the *Grand Monarque*, and later before that of the Regency, the rôle which had been initiated by the masters of the new school of pulpit oratory, of which he was a follower, but no mere disciple. There are features in his eloquence for which we might vainly look in Bossuet or even in Bourdaloue. Which of the two last-named would have dared to speak before the assembled court as Massillon spoke in his Lent sermons for the year 1701? "Do you not, perhaps," he asked his haughty listeners, "turn the public misery to your advantage? Do you not, perhaps, make of indigence a barbarous occasion of gain? Do you not, perhaps, virtually spoil the unfortunate, whilst affecting to extend to them a succouring hand? And do you not know the inhuman art of profiting by the tears and necessities of your brethren?"<sup>1</sup> The terrible insinuation is eloquent both of the texture of the times and of the courage of the preacher—a courage which prevented him from preaching before the court during the last eleven years of Louis' reign. The Regent appointed him, however, Bishop of Clermont in 1717, and the following year he preached before the young king and the court the Lent sermons, which, under the name of *Petit Carême*, are by many considered as his master work. Massillon stands out, during the later years of his life, like the last great rock in a boiling sea of scepticism and immorality, strong in the simple grandeur of his incorruptibility, firm in his resistance to a flood which had overwhelmed so many of his contemporaries and of his cloth. The spirit of Massillon's religious doctrine seems to have hit the mean between the uncompromising severity of Bossuet and the mild tolerance of Fénelon; and it is a true mark of his genius and of the steadfastness of his

<sup>1</sup> Sermon on *Almsgiving*.

personal religion and morality, that the excesses and ribaldry with which the regency was so deeply stained, did not force him against his nature into a morose asceticism, as with a weaker man they might have done. He was received into the Academy in 1719, on the death of the Abbé de Louvois, and in his introductory speech he declaimed against the abuses of the stage ; but he says nothing which can be construed into a reproach against the stage itself. In one of his sermons, again, he commends the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which, as a consistent Roman Catholic, I suppose he was obliged to do ; but, to make up for it, he pointedly goes back to the massacre of St. Bartholomew, in order to express his horror at the crime. In 1715 it fell to his lot to preach the funeral oration on the death of Louis XIV., and those who may have expected that they would hear nothing but abject flattery and glorification of the dead, must have been greatly disappointed. "God alone is great, my brethren!" he exclaimed to the court ; nor did he omit, then and on many subsequent occasions, to draw attention to the duties rather than to the majesty of the monarch.

Massillon made one gigantic mistake in his life, which must have produced the worst possible effect on the minds of religious men in France, and which goes far to dim the splendour of an otherwise irreproachable career. He stood sponsor for the doctrine and good morals of the sceptical and dissolute Dubois,<sup>1</sup> the worst of the reprobate clique whose vices rendered the court of the regency infamous ; and he assisted in the consecration of the future cardinal to the archbishopric of Cambrai.<sup>2</sup> It is not apparent what kind or degree of pressure was put upon Massillon in order to secure his services. That Dubois was powerful and astute needs no other proof than the fact that he had induced George I. of England to plead with the regent for his preferment, and

<sup>1</sup> 1656-1723.

<sup>2</sup> 1720.

that he subsequently found means to obtain the red hat from Rome.

Massillon effected by pathos, indignation, or exhortation, what Bourdaloue had effected by force of logic and declamation; and his eloquence has been extolled by some of his fellow-countrymen above that of his great predecessors in the pulpit. His style is pure, nervous, and goes straight to the heart; his manly courage adds to it a conviction which we shall seek in vain in the words of men not thoroughly genuine or straightforward. He has been called the very first of French orators, and a model of accomplished eloquence.<sup>1</sup> Compare with the adulation lavished by Bossuet on Louis XIV. the following apostrophe to Louis XV.,<sup>2</sup> from a sermon by Massillon on the *Humanity of the great towards the people*, taken from the *Petit Carême*.

"Listen to this multitude whom Jesus Christ this day feeds in the desert; they would make him king over them, would 'seize him and make him their king.'<sup>3</sup> Already they build Him a throne in their hearts, not being able to raise Him to that of David and the kings of Judah, his ancestors: they acknowledge his claim to royalty only by his humanity. Ah! if men elected their own masters, it would be no longer the noble or the valiant whom they would choose; it would be the most tender, the most humane masters, who might be at the same time their fathers.

"Happy, great God, the nation to whom Thou in thy pity dost assign a sovereign of this character! Fortunate omens appear to promise it to us; clemency and majesty, written on the brow of this august infant, already bespeak to us the felicity of our people; his sweet and beneficent inclinations daily confirm and increase our hopes. Cherish then, O my God, these first pledges of our fortune. Make him as tender towards the people as the pious prince to whom he owes his birth, and whom Thou didst but hold out to the earth. He desired to reign, Thou knowest, only to render us happy; our miseries were his

<sup>1</sup> By Maury and Voltaire.

<sup>2</sup> 1710-1774.

<sup>3</sup> St. John vi. 15.



miseries, our afflictions were his, and his heart was but one heart with our own. May clemency and mercy, then, increase with age in this precious infant, and flow in him together with the blood of a father so humane and so merciful! May the sweetness and majesty of his countenance be ever the image of those within his soul! May his people be to him always as dear as he is to his people! May he take from the tenderness of the nation towards him the rule and measure of the love which he ought to have for it! Thus will he be as great as his great-grandfather (Louis XIV.), more glorious than all his ancestors; and his humanity will be the source of our felicity on earth and of his happiness in heaven.”<sup>1</sup>

In addition to his sermons Massillon wrote *Panegyrics of the Saints, Ecclesiastical Conferences*, considered by Maury his best work, *Paraphrases of the Psalms, Synodal Discourses*, and *Episcopal Charges*.

<sup>1</sup> “Écoutez cette multitude que Jésus-Christ rassasie aujourd’hui dans le désert; ils veulent l’établir roi sur eux : *ut raperent eum et facerent eum regem*. Ils lui dressent déjà un trône dans leur cœur, ne pouvant le faire remonter encore sur celui de David et des rois de Juda ses ancêtres : ils ne reconnaissent son droit à la royauté que par son humanité. Ah ! si les hommes se donnaient des maîtres, ce ne serait ni les plus nobles, ni les plus vaillants qu’ils choisiraient ; ce serait les plus tendres, les plus humains, des maîtres qui fussent en même temps leurs pères.

“Heureuse la nation, grand Dieu, à qui vous destinez dans votre miséricorde un souverain de ce caractère ! D’heureux présages semblent nous le promettre ; la clémence et la majesté, peintes sur le front de cet auguste enfant, nous annoncent déjà la félicité de nos peuples ; ses inclinations douces et bienfaisantes rassurent et font croître tous les jours nos espérances. Cultivez donc, ô mon Dieu, ces premiers gages de notre bonheur. Rendez-le aussi tendre pour les peuples que le prince pieux auquel il doit la naissance, et que vous n’avez fait que montrer à la terre. Il ne voulait régner, vous le savez, que pour nous rendre heureux ; nos misères étaient ses misères, nos afflictions étaient les siennes, et son cœur ne faisait qu’un cœur avec le nôtre. Que la clémence et la miséricorde croissent donc avec l’âge dans cet enfant précieux, et coulent en lui avec le sang d’un père si humain et si miséricordieux ! que la douceur et la majesté de son front soit toujours une image de celle de son âme ! Que son peuple lui soit aussi cher qu’il est lui-même cher à son peuple ! Qu’il prenne dans la tendresse de la nation pour lui la règle et la mesure de l’amour qu’il doit avoir pour elle ! Par là il sera aussi grand que son bisaïeul, plus glorieux que tous ses ancêtres ; et son humanité sera la source de notre félicité sur la terre et de son bonheur dans le ciel.”

## § 4. A SPIRITUAL FEMALE AUTHOR AND A SCEPTIC.

Madame de la Mothe-Guyon,<sup>1</sup> of whom we have already made mention, a young and attractive widow, who devoted herself to a religious life, and became the Mère Angélique of a sort of amorous mysticism only less pronounced than the exaggerated quietism of the Spaniard Molinos,<sup>2</sup> is a notable figure in the later decades of the seventeenth century. The spirit of her devotion may well have been inherited direct from Saint Theresa and Saint François de Sales ; but in her mouth the doctrine became an aggravated sentimentalism, leading to the utter neglect of all worldly and social duties, and not without danger of inducing the vices natural to idleness and excess of sentiment. She wrote more than one work. Her *Short and Easy Means of praying with the Heart*, establishes the principle which underlies her philosophy of religion. For the Christian, she maintains, it is sufficient, and even advisable, that in his communing with God he should dispense with the use of words, and suffer his heart to be moved by divine impulse, to feel rather than think his vows. To this end seclusion and silence are to be desired, though not absolutely necessary, and by this means the heart is engaged in an unceasing act of worship, and becomes immersed in the "ocean of divinity;" a habit which might be so induced and cultivated that "shepherds watching their flocks would possess the spirit of the ancient anchorites, and labourers guiding the ploughshare would commune happily with God; all vice would be banished in a short time, and the kingdom of God would be realised on earth." Others more fortunate, to whom bodily activity is not a necessity, might attain the

<sup>1</sup> 1648-1717.<sup>2</sup> 1627-1696.

condition of complete passiveness, and might adore the Divinity with a repose of body and soul equal to His own. The heart, plunged in such ecstasy, would be identified with the heart of God; all external things would become indifferent to it, and crime would have no power to sully it.

Such is the teaching unfolded in the *Short and Easy Means*, expanded in the *Spiritual Torrents*, which brought down persecution on the head of Madame Guyon, but which previously enlisted for her the sympathies of Fénelon, of Madame de Maintenon, even of the sisterhood of Saint-Cyr. In the result, this new-fangled quietism was checked and almost suppressed; and its high-priestess, imprisoned at Vincennes, retracted her opinions, though without regaining her liberty.

Charles de Saint-Evremond,<sup>1</sup> a nonagenarian, who took part in nearly the whole literary activity of the seventeenth century, and who yet died inspired with the riper ideas of the eighteenth century, was at once a classical scholar, a commentator, a critic, a moralist, and a historian. Born at Coutances, in Normandy, he commenced an adventurous career as a soldier, and wielded the pen as well as the sword during the disturbances of the Fronde. Independent in thought as he was bold in expression, he held aloof from the tide of flattery which greeted the earlier successes of Louis XIV., and gave grievous offence to that monarch by writing a satirical letter to the Duke de Créqui about the treaty of the Pyrenees. This letter was never published, but the manuscript was discovered two years after it was written, in a box which the writer had entrusted to Madame Duplessis-Belliére, a friend of Fouquet. Saint-Evremond, finding himself in danger of the Bastille, fled from his native country, and went first to Holland, and afterwards to England, where

<sup>1</sup> 1613-1703.

he resided for the remainder of his life, where he continued to write, and eventually secured a tomb in Westminster Abbey. His productions are numerous, though none of them has any very great pretensions. They were in high favour amongst his contemporaries ; a circumstance to which their necessarily surreptitious publication in France contributed not a little. It may be that a certain epicureanism of disposition alone prevented him from completing some work of wider scope and more thorough elaboration, which might have rendered him as famous as the best kindred spirits of his day. "In order to raise him to the first rank," a French critic<sup>1</sup> has said of Saint-Evremond, "he needed perhaps only the courage of an ambition able to apply itself perseveringly to lofty objects. Was he not so indifferent to his literary glory that he declared himself ready to sacrifice eight ages of glory to eight days of existence? And yet, although he wrote without thought of the morrow, for his own pleasure and that of the circles in which his energy was aroused, there are many enduring passages in the too confused variety of these detached fragments, wherein so much ingenious reason is combined with the caprices of an entertaining pen." Amongst Saint-Evremond's best known productions, which are read to this day, we may mention his *Parallel between Turenne and Condé*, his *Reflections on the varied Genius of the Roman People*, *Reflections on Tragedy and Comedy*, *Observations on Sallust and Tacitus*, and a *Discourse on Belles Lettres*.

### § 5. WRITERS OF MEMOIRS.

The political and social history of the latter part of the reign of Louis XIV. and of the regency is illustrated by the

<sup>1</sup> M. Gustave Merlet.



works of a number of writers of memoirs, more or less interesting and valuable for the light which they throw on the decline of France, and on its causes. Of these the most considerable, both for their revelations and for their literary style, are the *Memoirs* of Louis de Rouvroi, Duke de Saint-Simon.<sup>1</sup> The son of a lieutenant-general, he obtained his company in a cavalry regiment at the age of nineteen, and after serving with some distinction, left the army in 1702, and lived at court, in constant attendance upon the *Grand Monarque*, until the latter's death. Saint-Simon's *Memoirs* are not an afterthought of old age. He seems from the first to have conceived the idea of preserving a record of all that passed before his eyes ; and though he did not complete the task until close to the end of his life, he doubtless wrote much of what we now possess whilst yet a young man.

Scarcely of age, Saint-Simon allied himself with the reforming party at the court of Louis XIV., desiring in particular to assign limits to the royal prerogative, in the interest of his own order rather than of the commonalty, no doubt honestly believing that the greater influence of the nobility would tend to reduce the evils arising from an abuse of the absolute power of the crown. His advice and friendship were esteemed both by the Duke of Burgundy and by the Duke d'Orléans.<sup>2</sup> The latter, whom report accused of having exhausted the catalogue of human vices even before the death of his uncle, had been expressly excluded from the future government of the country by the will of Louis XIV. Saint-Simon advised him to appeal from that decision to that of the peers of France ; and when Philip became Regent he made the young duke a member of his council. In this capacity Saint-Simon displayed much boldness and no inconsiderable statesmanship and integrity. He advised, indeed, a universal bankruptcy and national repudiation ; but he

<sup>1</sup> 1675-1755.

<sup>2</sup> 1674-1723.

also counselled the convocation of the States-general, and did his best to induce moderation in the negotiations pending between France and the nations with whom she had so long waged war. His expedients for raising money were both numerous and shrewd: he extracted it from foreign nations as well as from his own fellow-countrymen; and yet his counsel led to the reform of the taxation in more than one respect, and to the judicious application of the money raised by his devices. If, however, Saint-Simon was one of the regent's friends in matters of state, he was by no means one of the *roués* with whom Philippe d'Orléans loved to associate: he was a friend of the morning, not of the evening,<sup>1</sup> and his reputation for uprightness of conduct cannot be gainsaid. It is true that he opposed the Regent's desire to re-admit the expatriated Protestants, and that in many other respects his advice was short-sighted and tortuous. Yet on the whole he was one of the most honest of the council of regency to which the affairs of France were committed.

Saint-Simon's *Memoirs* embrace the second half of the reign of Louis XIV., commencing with the year 1694, extending over the whole of the regency, and ending with the year 1725. Whenever he is able to speak of events which passed before his own eyes, and when he does not wish to give vent to his malice or to revenge himself upon his enemies, he depicts graphically, and with much of the instinct of a genuine historian. He may be a gossip, but he is a gossip of the best kind, conscious that what he relates may form part of the serious annals of his generation. His style may be peculiar, but it is concise, and at least his own; and it gains force by his originality, and often by its straightforwardness. He finds a phrase or a word for the man he wishes to sketch, and it will stick to him; whilst its truth is enhanced by a tinge of the

<sup>1</sup> M. Henri Martin.

causticity of Saint-Simon. He never forgets that he is a peer of the realm, with duties and privileges distinct from those of the monarch; and his pride of caste leads him to take a stand to some degree independent of the king himself, and of those through whom the king chose to act. He did not doubt, for instance, that Louis had married Madame de Maintenon; but he never consented to acknowledge and pay court to the latter as to a queen. He resented the conversion of the court into a clique, in which a woman was virtually absolute; and hence he never attained, under Louis, the influence possessed by many of his inferiors. With a great amount of haughtiness and even loftiness of character, Saint-Simon undoubtedly combines no small amount of pettiness. Nothing can be more ridiculous than the gravity with which he returns again and again to the question whether the first president of the council should wear his cap whilst officially engaged, or whether he should lay it before him on the table. This *affaire du bonnet* is, in fact, a curiosity of history; it is the gist of Saint-Simon's narrative, the type of the littlenesses which occupy at least one-half of the *Memoirs*. The lack of discernment and judgment which has led Saint-Simon into such a quagmire of unimportant trifles almost justifies the ridicule which has been cast upon him by many of his fellow-countrymen; but the really valuable portions of his book so far outweigh the remainder, that his credit as a writer of memoirs easily survives the disdain of his detractors.

Few portions of Saint-Simon's *Memoirs* are more graphic than those which reproduce the court of Louis XIV. with all the clearness and baldness of an unflattering photograph. The duke tells us the truth of the selfish king and his victims, and says of him, "Louis XIV., without the fear of the devil which God left him in his greatest disorders, we not see, as we read



this, the haughty, proud monarch, strutting about at Versailles, and acting his royal part; and do we not feel that there is no reservation in the mind of the writer? When passion does not sway him he is impartial: if anything, he liked Louis, and disliked Madame de Maintenon. Hear in a few words what he says of the relations existing between them when both were already old:—

“Madame de Maintenon, who was greatly afraid of the open air, and of many other unpleasant things, could not on this score obtain any immunity. All that she secured, under pretext of modesty and other reasons, was that she should travel alone; but, whatever her condition, she was obliged to set out, and to follow at the moment arranged, and to be at her destination, and duly prepared, before the king came to her. She made many journeys to Marly in a state in which it would not be fit for a servant to travel. She made one to Fontainebleau when it really could not be told whether she would not die on the road. In whatever condition she might be, the king went to her at his usual hour, and did what he had designed; even if she were in bed, and perspiring heavily with fever. The king, who, as has been said, liked the fresh air, and who shunned the heat of a room, expressed surprise on arriving to find everything closed, and had the windows open, not relenting though he saw her in this condition, and that up to ten o'clock, when he went away to supper, and without considering the coolness of the night. If there was to be music, fever or headache made no difference; and a hundred lamps in the eyes. Thus the king always took his own course, without ever asking her if she were not troubled by it.”

This is history of the most painful character, but it is also most truthful. Saint-Simon tells us more of Louis XIV. and his court than half-a-dozen of his contemporaries put together.

Another court-chronicler was Philippe de Courcillon, Marquis de Dangeau,<sup>1</sup> a descendant, through his mother, of

<sup>1</sup> 1638-1720.



Duplessis-Mornay, of an old Huguenot family, but too good a courtier to remain a Protestant long. He became early in life a Roman Catholic, served under Turenne and in Flanders, was aide-de-camp of the king, and entrusted with several diplomatic missions. He was a favourite of Louis and the royal family. The Marquis wrote a *Journal*, which contains everything that was done at court from 1684 until 1720, and gives a very minute though faithful picture of the life and doings of the *Grand Monarque* and his family. It is a mere diary, rather monotonous, and possessing neither the causticity nor the interest of Saint-Simon.

The memoirs of Charles Perrault<sup>1</sup> end where Saint-Simon begins; he died in the third year of the eighteenth century, and his *Illustrious Men of the Age of Louis XIV.* deals only with those who had earned notoriety before Saint-Simon attained his majority. A Parliamentary advocate, a client of Colbert's, and comptroller-general of royal buildings, he had many opportunities of mixing with and studying the manners of the men of the day. He was a scholar as well as a writer of memoirs, and his *Parallel between the Ancients and the Moderns* is marked by much discrimination, although it drew down upon him a crushing reply from Boileau. Perrault, however, is best known to fame as the author of *Fairy Tales*, whereof a fellow-countryman<sup>2</sup> has written—"What a lively attraction there is in the smallest details of these charming trifles! What truth in the characters! What ingenious and unexpected originality in the circumlocution! What fresh and striking vigour in the dialogues! Thus I am not afraid to assert that, so long as there remains in our hemisphere a people, a tribe, a village, a tent, in which civilisation discovers a refuge against the progressive invasions of barbarism,

<sup>1</sup> 1628-1703.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Nodier.

there will be related, by the light of the solitary hearth, the adventurous Odyssey of *Tom Thumb*, the conjugal revenge of *Blue Beard*, the clever manœuvres of *Puss in Boots*; and the Ulysses, the Othello, the Figaro of the children will survive as long as the others."

## CHAPTER VI.

## § 1. LITERATURE OF THE REFUGEES.

"How far Louis XIV. carried his zeal for the church—that virtue of sovereigns who have received power and the sword only that they may be props of the altar and defenders of its doctrine! Specious reasons of state! in vain did you oppose to Louis the timid views of human wisdom, the body of the realm enfeebled by the flight of so many citizens, the progress of trade checked, either by the deprivation of their industry or by the furtive removal of their wealth! Dangers fortify his zeal. The work of God fears not man. He believes that he strengthens his throne by overthrowing that of error. The profane temples are destroyed, the pulpits of seduction are cast down. The prophets of falsehood are torn from their flocks. At the first blow dealt to it by Louis, heresy falls, disappears, and is reduced either to hide itself in the obscurity whence it issued, or to cross the seas, and to take with it into foreign lands its false gods, its bitterness, and its rage."<sup>1</sup>

It was one of the harshest, least just, and perhaps we may add the most ironical things that Massillon has written; and it may at all events be supplemented by the natural remark that, whatever else the fugitive Huguenots carried with them from France, during the persecution which followed upon the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, they carried their patience, their courage, their handicraft, and mental gifts, enriching the

<sup>1</sup> Massillon, *Funeral Oration on Louis XIV.*

countries to which they fled as much as they impoverished the land from which they were driven. As to the number of these exiles accounts have greatly varied ; but it is not unsafe to rely upon the computation of a Roman Catholic writer, who estimates the number at 230,000.<sup>1</sup> Massillon is so far right that Louis did what he had undertaken to do thoroughly. Writing to the Cardinal de Noailles in the midst of the *dragonnades*, Madame de Maintenon says : "The soldiers are killing numbers of the fanatics ; they hope soon to rid Languedoc of them." Madame de Sévigné, writing to a friend from Brittany, and ridiculing the notion that she was dull, exclaims : "No, we are not so dull. Hanging is my recreation. They have just taken four-and-twenty or thirty of these men, and are going to throw them off." If a joke, a very ghastly one. And again, writing to Bussy-Rabutin, she says : "You have doubtless seen the edict by which the king revokes that of Nantes. There is nothing so fine as what it contains, and never has any king done, or will do, a more memorable deed." Whereto her cousin replies : "I vastly admire the conduct of the king in destroying the Huguenots. The wars which have been carried on against them, and the St. Bartholomew, had given some reputation to the sect. His Majesty has gradually undermined it ; and the edict he has just issued, supported by the dragoons and by Bourdaloue, will soon give them the *coup de grâce*." On another occasion Madame de Sévigné writes to the same correspondent, relating a dreadfully fatiguing journey which her son-in-law, M. de Grignan, had made in Dauphiné, "to pursue and punish the miserable Huguenots, who issued from their holes, and vanished like ghosts to avoid extermination." Mademoiselle de Scudéry writes : "The king has worked great miracles against the Huguenots ; and the authority which he has employed to unite

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Smiles, in his *Huguenots in France*, has brought together a large consensus of contemporary opinion upon this subject.



them to the church will be most salutary to themselves and to their children, who will be educated in the purity of the faith." In the Academy, the Abbé Tallemant des Réaux, who himself had been a Huguenot, referring to the destruction of a Protestant place of worship by the mob of Charenton, exclaimed: "Happy ruins, the finest trophy France ever beheld!" Thomas Corneille eulogised Louis for "throttling the Reformation." Fontenelle won a prize given by the Academy for a poem on the Revocation. La Fontaine, La Bruyère, Quinault, Madame Deshoulières, the tender singer of Seine pastorals, and many others of undoubted piety and sense, in addition to the great ecclesiastics already cited, praised the persecution of the Protestants, and rejoiced at what only a few Catholics perceived to be a notable disaster for France.

The refugees fled to England, to Holland, to Switzerland, to Germany: ministers, professors, scholars, gentlemen of refined education and taste, as well as artizans and labourers who were able to secure the means of escape. "Men of commerce and industry betook themselves to England, Germany, and above all Prussia, which held out attractions for them; men of war, sailors for the most part, to England and the United Provinces; theologians or ardent believers, whom Switzerland could not receive, and whom the prudent policy of the Cantons did not permit them to retain, took their way to Holland, whither the nobility, with the lettered portion of the *émigrés*, rapidly crowded."<sup>1</sup> There were many reasons why the most cultivated of the refugees preferred Holland as their country of exile. They found there a certain robust political freedom, a greater liberty of the press, and even a more intimate familiarity with their own language than in England or Germany. Writing in 1684, Bayle says: "The French lan-

<sup>1</sup> M. Sayous, *Histoire de la littérature française à l'Etranger*, vol. i. p. 220, to whom I am under great obligations for this and the following chapters.

guage is so well known in this country that French books have greater circulation than any others. There are hardly any men of letters who do not understand French, even if they cannot speak it. Latin is not so well known, which is the reason why M. Jurieu now delivers all his lectures in French, that he may have for hearers even those who do not understand Latin."<sup>1</sup>

## § 2. BAYLE, HIS FRIENDS AND OPPONENTS.

Pierre Bayle<sup>2</sup> and Pierre Jurieu<sup>3</sup> were amongst the first of the religious *émigrés* who settled in Holland, having together sought a refuge in Rotterdam, upon the enforced closing of the Academy at Sedan,<sup>4</sup> in 1681. This Academy was one of the four principal Protestant seminaries of learning in France; its professors—Bayle, Jurieu, Abbadie, Basnage, and others—all expatriated by the same oppressive decree, were amongst the soundest scholars and acutest critics of their age.

Jurieu, son of a Protestant clergyman of Blois, and of the daughter of Pierre Dumoulin, had studied theology both in Holland and England; and his reputation was such that he received, whilst yet young, numerous invitations from churches and academies in his native country to accept office. He chose to fill the chair of theology and Hebrew at Sedan, and devoted himself at once to his students and the labours of his pastoral charge. Not without ambition of a still higher order, he aimed at being the Bossuet of the Protestant

<sup>1</sup> *Nouvelles Lettres de Bayle*, vol. ii. p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> 1647-1706.

<sup>3</sup> 1637-1713.

<sup>4</sup> The town itself, the Lille of the seventeenth century, with upwards of a hundred manufactories of iron, steel, and broadcloth, was completely ruined by the dispersion of the Protestants. The destiny of France had in store for it a more enduring, though a very different kind of notoriety!

Church ; and indeed, by his oratorical power, his energy, and personal influence, he affords a tolerably close parallel with Bossuet, in all except the possession of worldly fortune and repute. He was one of the staunchest opponents of those who sought to bring about a pacific reunion of the two Churches, and wrote, with great controversial force and no little elegance, a number of polemical works which entitle him to considerable literary fame.<sup>1</sup> In Holland he continued to write, with ever-increasing force and even violence. In his exile he became imbued with mysticism ; and his *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, printed in 1686, and circulated secretly in France, wherein he announced the speedy deliverance of the Protestant Church, and the destruction of the Papist Babylon, incited an outbreak of fanaticism in the Cevennes, which was attended by a great amount of bloodshed. In 1688 and the following year he caused to be issued at Rotterdam the *Sighs of Enslaved France, aspiring to be Free*—a famous series of pamphlets attributed to Levassor, an Oratorian who had become a Protestant. M. Henri Martin<sup>2</sup> says of these pamphlets that they are “a singular medley of liberal aspirations and retrograde tendencies towards an imperfectly appreciated

<sup>1</sup> In 1675 he published an *Apology for the Morals of the Reformers, or a Defence of their Doctrine touching Justification, the Perseverance of the true Saints, and the Certitude that each Believer ought to have and must have of his Salvation*. This last work was a reply to Arnauld's *Overturning of the Morality of Jesus by the Doctrine of the Calvinists touching Justification*—a somewhat unjust and ungenerous attack by the Jansenist doctor on the morals of the Reformation. Five years later he wrote his *Preservative against Change of Religion, or a just and true Representation of the Roman Catholic Religion, as opposed to the flattering Portraits which have been drawn of it, and especially to that of M. de Condom*. This he followed up in the succeeding year by his *Policy of the Clergy of France, or Curious Discussions between two Roman Catholics, the one a Parisian and the other a Provincial, on the Means employed in these days to destroy the Protestant Religion in this Kingdom*. The last work especially produced a great effect upon the authorities of the Church and the Government, and contributed more than anything else to the suppression of the Academy at Sedan.

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire de France*, vol. xiv. p. 169.

past, and are especially characterised by that hatred of modern political and administrative unity which Boulainvilliers and Saint-Simon were about to express with so much energy. To read them with moderate attention is enough to show that they cannot be Jurieu's own, except perhaps the last three or four of the fifteen. Jurieu would never have expressed himself on the Roman Church as is done in these pages, still all but Catholic; and the political and rationalistic spirit of these writings has nothing of his mystic and apocalyptic audacity."<sup>1</sup> Nothing, in fact, came amiss to Jurieu by which he could count on wounding the Roman Church. The close of his life was disturbed by his quarrel with Bayle, who, inclining to free thought in religious matters, declared boldly against theological constraint. Jurieu, whilst opposed to the tolerant principles of his former friend, was in political theory a champion of the sovereignty of the people, and Bayle attacked him both on this ground and on the ground of his uncompromising Calvinism, almost wholly breaking away from the religious traditions of his youth.

Bayle was, like Jurieu, the son of a Protestant pastor, and his education, neglected at first, was afterwards pursued with intense eagerness, but with too little system to produce an exact scholar or a thoroughly well-regulated mind. At the age of twenty-three he abjured the Protestantism in which he had been brought up, only to return to it a year or two later. His father sent him to Geneva that he might prepare to enter his own calling; but the restless mind of the future critic and philosopher revolted against the constraints of theological study; he became tutor in several families in succession, and whilst in Switzerland made many friends; Basnage, Louis Tronchin, and Constant amongst them. His letters, still extant, prove at once the activity of his mind

<sup>1</sup> The Protestant French historian, Michel Nicolas, maintains, however, that they are written by Jurieu.



and the philosophic predilections which he entertained at that period of his career. The style which, ripened and compressed, appeared years afterwards in his *Dictionary*, is already manifest in these fresh, quaint, and discursive letters, the letters of a bookworm and a hoarder of literary odds and ends, and still the letters of a philosopher. Writing on one occasion to his elder brother, who had come into a small property, he says :

“ I had wished with a very sincere heart that it had been more considerable. Such as it is, may God vouchsafe to let you long and peaceably enjoy it. Martial, enumerating the things necessary to a happy life, sets first of all property accruing by heritage, and not acquired by severe labours, absence of legal strife, and domestic arrangements not liable to interruption : *res non parita labore sed relictæ, focus perennis, lis nunquam*. With the first item I wish you may have all the rest ; and as for the offers you so generously make me, believe me, my dear brother, that they are superfluous. Knowing as I do your candour, your affection and disinterestedness, I believed that what was yours was mine ; and believe that I would do the same for you if I had any good fortune.”<sup>1</sup>

Returning to France after a few years, Bayle taught successively at Rouen and at Paris, until Basnage, who had accepted a chair at Sedan, procured for his friend an invitation to the professorship of philosophy in the Academy of that town. It must be confessed that Bayle was a little out of place in that professorship. He was a philosopher rather negatively than positively and scholastically, as he confesses himself : “ I am a peripatetic in everything except as regards physics, wherein I am entirely against Aristotle or Descartes.” Nor was he even consistent, either in his present profession or by natural bent of mind. A young Jesuit had sought to prove—perhaps no very difficult task

<sup>1</sup> *Nouvelles Lettres*, vol. i. p. 120.

—that Malebranche, like his master Descartes, exhibited a tendency unfavourable to Roman Catholicism, and rather in conformity with the Calvinistic doctrine. Bayle went out of his way to defend Descartes against what, at least in his eyes, should not have been a very serious accusation. It was at Sedan that Bayle's friendship for Jurieu was commenced and cultivated; although it is evident from his voluminous correspondence that he numbered amongst his acquaintance several of the prominent Romanists of the literary world.

His first work of importance was a volume of *Thoughts concerning the Comet*, published in Rotterdam soon after taking up his residence there. It was suggested by the great comet of 1680, which had been the subject of considerable discussion amongst scientific men, and of no little consternation on the part of the public. The first sketch of the work was in the form of a letter to the Paris *Mercur*e, the publication of which had been forbidden by the lieutenant of police, from whom an authorisation would have been necessary. In 1682 he addressed this letter, developed and enlarged, to a doctor of the Sorbonne, and succeeding editions bear the title of *Various Thoughts, written to a Doctor of the Sorbonne on the occasion of the Comet which appeared in the month of December 1680*. The plan of this singular work is somewhat quaint. If, argues the author, comets have anything to do with future worldly events, it must be either as causes or as signs—to produce, or to announce them beforehand. The first supposition is at once a heresy and an absurdity. To accept them as signs of the Divine will would be altogether contrary to the spirit of revelation; and directly opposed to scientific truth, since they are manifestly a part of the solar system; whereas to believe them to be indications of coming calamities would be to think that God would encourage idolatry in the human race, which is an

impiety. It may, however, be argued that God would permit these indications of coming events in order to prevent men from falling into atheism: whereto Bayle replies—that this would be to have recourse to one evil in order to prevent another, and, as he maintains, a greater evil to prevent a less. This, in fact, is the point to which the author desired to draw his readers—the comparison between idolatry and atheism, wherein the latter gains the full advantage. These *Thoughts* are, in short, an apology for atheism; although in another sense they serve chiefly as a thread whereon the author strings a thousand facts, illustrations, and curious sallies of irony and wit. Bayle makes in his *Thoughts* a remarkable observation. “How do we know,” he says, “if at the present moment there is not some gentleman, still learning at school, who is destined to become the scourge of France before twenty years have passed.” This was written in 1682; and Marlborough, precisely twenty years later, and Eugène of Savoy a few years after the specified time, verified the saying of the acute Bayle.

The *General Criticism of the History of Calvinism*, written in the course of a fortnight, was a rejoinder to Maimbourg’s *History of Calvinism*, wherein the Jesuit had expended a great deal of satire upon the reformed religion, but which drew down upon himself a castigation from the master-critic. Bayle’s work was condemned to be publicly burned by the executioner; but it raised his reputation throughout France, and made him the centre of many hopes amongst the more liberal-minded of his fellow-countrymen. A more important labour now began to occupy the time of the exile; for in March 1684 he brought out the first number of *Tidings from the Republic of Letters*, printed in Amsterdam, somewhat upon the plan of the *Journal des Savants*, which de Sallo had commenced in Paris in the year 1665. Each number consisted of extracts and literary judgments, arranged with con-

siderable taste for what was virtually a first attempt, and which is of inestimable value for the history of contemporary European literature. The new periodical was received with much satisfaction by the reading public in France and elsewhere. It was an age of vast literary activity, and that rather critical and retrospective than original. The quarrel of "the Ancients and the Moderns" was at its height; questions of philosophy and of taste were discussed with infinite zest and warmth. Bayle stood beyond the circle of the principal combatants—or rather he combated them all from his own independent ground; Arnauld, Bossuet, Malebranche, the Jesuits, Fontenelle, Madame Dacier, Jurieu himself, were amongst the writers with whom he delighted to measure his strength. The English Royal Society invited him to maintain a correspondence with them, at the same time referring to "the superior tact and high talent of M. Bayle for philosophy." The friends of freedom in every land, in France especially, read the *Tidings* with eagerness; and now and again Bayle would receive a contribution from a Frenchman, who, still clinging to his native country, dare not or could not acknowledge all that he thought. One such came from Fontenelle, an allegory purporting to describe, in a letter from Batavia, a civil war in the island of Borneo, between two pretenders with the transparent names of Mreo and Enègue.<sup>1</sup> Bayle was on this occasion an indiscreet editor, and revealed the authorship of the letter; so that, as Voltaire informs us, Fontenelle was obliged to rescue himself on the road to the Bastille by a copy of verses in praise of the extirpation of heresy.

The revocation of the Edict of Nantes struck hard beyond the boundaries of France. The same persecution which filled Holland with refugees, which drained the life-blood

<sup>1</sup> "Rome" and "Genève." The *Relation de l'île de Bornéo* appeared in the number for January 1686.



from the unhappy land, preparing the way gradually and surely for the inundation of indifferentism and immorality whereby France was presently overwhelmed, which drove into England many of its best and noblest children,<sup>1</sup> made itself bitterly felt by many of those who, like Bayle, had not waited to be expatriated by force. The exile's father died soon after the revocation; his elder brother succumbed to the rigour of a close confinement. Bayle solaced the bitterness of his heart by writing a pamphlet full of indignation and solemn warnings, under the title, "*What France wholly Catholic under Louis the Great really is; and he followed it up by another: A philosophical Commentary on the saying of Jesus Christ—'Compel them to come in,' wherein is proved by various demonstrative arguments that there is nothing more abominable than to make conversions by force, and wherein are refuted all the sophisms of forcible converters, as well as the apology for persecutions made by Saint Augustine; translated from the English of Mr. Briggs, by M. J. F. Canterbury, 1686.*"<sup>2</sup> The line of argument may be judged from a brief extract:—

"It is here that our adversaries imagine they have us by the throat. It follows from your reasoning, they say, that you must endure in the commonwealth, not only Socinians, but Jews and Turks also; now this consequence is absurd: therefore the doctrine from which it springs is so likewise. I reply that I admit the consequence; but I deny that it is absurd. There are occasions in which moderate sentiments are best, and the two extremes vicious; which indeed is very general. But in this case it would be impossible to discover the true medium; we must have all or nothing; we cannot have good reasons for tolerating one sect if they are not good for tolerating another. It is a similar case to that in the Caudine Forks, where

<sup>1</sup> Amongst others the ancestors of Richard Chenevix Trench and Harriet Martineau.

<sup>2</sup> This pamphlet is of course no translation, and was published by Wolfgang, at Amsterdam.

Herennius Pontius counselled one or other of two extremes, either to treat all the Romans well, or to slay them all; and experience showed that his son, who would have observed a middle course, lacked understanding."

The *Philosophical Commentary* made a great stir, and its Socinianism displeased Jurieu and others of the Protestants as much as the authorities of the Orthodox Church. Bayle did his best to divert suspicion of the authorship from himself; the more so when Jurieu declared it to have been written by a cabal inimical to the Protestants, for the purpose of bringing them into odium. Bayle's position was in fact a very difficult one; for the more he inclined to a pronounced scepticism, the more he found himself isolated from the great majority of his friends. The lamentable quarrels which sadden the annals of the refugees in Holland date for the most part from the publication of this *Commentary*. The most famous of the learned exiles were at this time assembled in the Low Countries. Besides Bayle and Jurieu, Rotterdam possessed Basnage, Dubosc, and de Superville; Claude, Jaquelot, and La Placette were at the Hague; Le Clerc was at Amsterdam. Of those who clung most jealously to the reformed faith, Jurieu was generally regarded as the mouthpiece and the champion; and he deemed it his duty to protest vigorously against the excessive liberty of thought and expression claimed by Bayle. Bossuet did not fail to sting the ultra-Protestant champion by deducing from Bayle's opinions a general condemnation of the Protestants. "The glory of Christianity," he wrote, "is delivered over to the Socinians. The disease has risen to the head." Jurieu writhed under the reproach; and he began to write no less bitterly against his old friend than against his open enemy. He wrote a reply to the *Commentary*, called: *On the rights of the two Sovereigns in matters of Religion—the Conscience and the Prince*. The dispute was checked for a time by the

failing health of both ; and Bayle, obliged to cut down his literary labours to the lowest point, resigned his *Tidings from the Republic of Letters* into the hands of de Beauval. The quarrel broke out again, and embittered the closing years of both ; but the two veterans had each a great work in hand, to which the bulk of their time and energy was henceforth given :—Jurieu his *History of Dogmas*, and Bayle his *Historical and Critical Dictionary*.<sup>1</sup>

Bayle was in bad odour with his fellow-refugees during the last twelve years of his life. He had lost his place as professor, and he sought consolation both for this odium and for his poverty in the labour of love which occupied the period between 1694 and 1706, the date of his death. A distinguished literary English critic, who knew Bayle's works well, says of his dictionary, "Bayle, intent on escaping from all beaten tracks . . . opened an eccentric route, where at least he could encounter no parallel . . . In the history of men, in penetrating the motives of their conduct, in clearing up obscure circumstances, in detecting the strong and the weak parts of him whom he was trying, and in the cross-examination of the numerous witnesses he summoned, he assumed at once the judge and the advocate. . . . He collects everything ; if truths, they enter into his history ; if fictions, into discussions ; he places the secret by the side of the public story ; opinion is balanced against opinion : if his arguments grow tedious, a lucky anecdote or an enlivening tale relieves the folio page. . . Human nature in her shifting scenery, and the human mind in its eccentric directions, open on his view ; so that an unknown person, or a worthless book, are equally objects for his speculation with the most eminent. . . . Bayle is reproached for carrying his speculations too far into the wilds of scepticism—he wrote in distempered

<sup>1</sup> Isaac Disraeli, *Curiosities of Literature*, vol. ii. "Bayle's Critical Dictionary."

times ; he was witnessing the *dragonnades* and the *révocations* of the Romish Church ; and he lived amidst the Reformed, or the French prophets, as we called them. . . . His scepticism is said to have thrown everything into disorder. Is it a more positive evil to doubt than to dogmatise? . . . Bayle has himself described one of those self-tormenting and many-headed sceptics by a very noble figure, 'He was a hydra who was perpetually tearing himself.' " In reality, one can hardly discover what Bayle believed or disbelieved, but to our mind a strong feeling of morality is hidden beneath the vast accumulation of his sceptical remarks and suggestions, all garnered in his search after truth.

Biographical dictionaries were rather the fashion in Europe, and especially in France, when Bayle undertook to write his own. This limited his scope, but it could not limit the fertility of his pen. His subjects seem to have been taken almost at random ; but these once chosen he had nothing to do but to sit down in the midst of his books and write what his pen dictated. Moréri, Chappuzeau, were before him in the general idea ; but it is as difficult to imagine Bayle at a loss for material as it is to imagine him original. "I could not," he says in one of his letters, "meditate on the smallest matter. I never know, when I begin an article, what I shall say in the second sentence." That candidly premised, we know what to expect—nothing ; and we know what we may possibly encounter—everything.

Jacques Basnage,<sup>1</sup> a clergyman, a diplomatist and moralist, of an ancient family, and of about the same order of excellence to which Jurieu belonged as a Protestant pulpit orator, wrote a treatise on *Conscience*, more admired in his own age than read by succeeding ones ; but the greater portion of his time and talent was given to a *History of the*

<sup>1</sup> 1653-1723.



*Jews*, and to a *History of the United Provinces*. Posterity has accorded a greater value to Jean le Clerc's<sup>1</sup> *Bibliothèques*; the careful and laborious notes of a learned bookworm, whose life was passed in omnivorous reading and deliberate reproduction. Such a man ought to live for ever, in order that five centuries of daily work might evolve a shelf-full of commentaries, to serve as a store-house for future generations. Le Clerc was a traveller, who, born at Geneva, visited England, France, and Holland; and in a volume of *Discourses on various questions of Theology* he shows himself an earnest champion of free opinion and expression. His *Life of Richelieu* is severe, even beyond what is just, but for the work of an exiled Protestant upon an absolutist minister of France it is remarkable for its candour and freedom from prejudice.

### § 3. EXILED PROTESTANT PASTORS.

Amongst the preachers of the Reformation who ministered to the church of the refugees, Pierre Dubosc<sup>2</sup> and Jean Claude<sup>3</sup> were conspicuous. Claude, even more than Jurieu, was the Bossuet of the exiled Protestant communion. Unwavering in faith, ready in resource, lofty and influential in his personal character, he was looked up to by his companions as the strength and ornament of their church; and he knew well how to maintain the dignity of the persecuted faith. If Dubosc was less learned, he was not less impressive and dignified. His style of oratory was more simply homiletic, less adorned but more pastoral than the scholarly eloquence of Claude. Of the latter, Bayle, who was in general not very lavish of praise, says,<sup>4</sup> "I do not know if one ever saw

<sup>1</sup> 1657-1736.

<sup>2</sup> 1623-1692.

<sup>3</sup> 1619-1687.

<sup>4</sup> *Nouvelles de la république des lettres*, number of November 1687.

more delicacy with more force, more abundance with more choice, more penetration with more justness, more vivacity of mind with more solidity of judgment, an easier phraseology with a more exact method, more elevation in the thoughts and more nobility in the language, more gentle and modest beauties with more grandeur and majesty." It seems to me that if he had possessed elegance he might possibly have rivalled the fame of Bossuet; as it was, his pen fairly supplied the deficiency, and in the controversy in which he was engaged with the orthodox bishop, he does not show to disadvantage. Of his pulpit eloquence we have no better example than the farewell address which he made to his congregation in Paris, whilst the king's *valet de pied* stood by, impatient to execute the monarch's orders, and to see the Protestant pastor beyond the borders of his native country; for while all Huguenot clergymen, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, had to leave France within a fortnight, Claude had the distinguished honour of additional severity, and of being obliged to leave on the very day of the revocation. This is what he says:

"Church of the Lord, once my entire joy, to-day my entire sorrow, weep! The cause is too natural. O, would to God we were at this moment, after the example of the sacrificing king Jehoiada, employed in renewing the alliance between God and his people! Promise to God that you will walk in His ways, that the truth shall be dearer to you than all things, and that you will be faithful to Him unto death, and I will swear on His behalf that He will be still your God! 'Yea!' saith the Eternal, 'I will be their God.' You promise it? Ye heavens, I take ye to witness between this people and their God, so that God shall be always your God; you shall be without pastors, but you shall have for pastor the great Shepherd of the sheep, whom you shall hear by His word. You shall no longer have ministers, but you shall have the Master. You shall no more come to hear our preaching; but you shall attend the sermon of the Son of God,

and receive instructions from His mouth. You shall no more hear our word, but you shall hear the voice of the Lord. You shall no more have temples, but the King dwells not in temples made with hands. With all your hearts, well united in the faith, make unto Him a holy house, which shall be raised to be a tabernacle of God in spirit. Of your houses make temples; consecrate them to God by a solemn fast, and there heedfully render him your services."

His *Complaints of the Protestants cruelly oppressed in the Kingdom of France*,<sup>1</sup> are worth reading even now, to show what means were employed by the *Grand Monarque* to convert his stubborn Huguenot subjects to the Roman Catholic faith, and to remind us what "moral suasion" meant in those days. This small book, in which Claude mentions all the sufferings of the Protestants in France, and says that he puts his trust in the God who delivered his children out of the bondage of Egypt, ends as follows :

"We do not ask for vengeance ; on the contrary, we wish that it may please Him to treat with repentance the hardened hearts of our enemies, and that then He may pardon them. . . . We wish that this little book which contains our complaints may serve as a protestation before heaven and before earth against all the violences which have been done to us in the kingdom of France. . . . We protest against the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, as against a manifest surprise done to the justice of the king, and a visible abuse of the royal authority and power. We protest against all the consequences of this revocation ; against the extinction of our religion in the whole kingdom of France, against the infamies and cruelties practised on dead bodies by refusing them burial, by throwing them in the common sewers, or by dragging them ignominiously on hurdles ; against the taking away of children to have them brought up in the Roman religion ; and against the order given to the parents to have them baptised by priests, and to entrust to them their education. We protest above all against this impious and detestable practice, at the

<sup>1</sup> Nominally published à Cologne, chez Pierre Marteau, 1686 ; really in Holland.

present moment prevalent in France, to make the religion dependent on the will of a mortal and corruptible king, and to treat perseverance in belief as a rebellion and a crime against the State, which is making of a man a god, and which is to authorise atheism or idolatry. We protest against the violent and inhuman detention of our brethren in France, in prisons or otherwise, to prevent them from leaving the kingdom, to go and seek elsewhere the liberty of their conscience."

These words may well bear comparison with the fulsome praises sung by Louis' courtiers and bishops about the royal omnipotence.

Daniel de Superville<sup>1</sup> came to Rotterdam in 1685, a young minister whom the *dragonnades* had driven from Poitou. He had been summoned to Versailles, and every effort was vainly made to induce him to recant; but he preferred expatriation to the most splendid temptations of the court. His reputation as a pulpit orator was above the average; and in this respect he was little, if at all, behind Claude and Dubosc. When William III. of England visited the Hague in 1691, it was de Superville who was chosen to preach before him. It may be, as Bayle maliciously said, that on such occasions as this he did not spare the incense; but at all events we do not find him asking or accepting the rewards which the flattery of an earthly monarch might have earned for him. He preached again in celebration of the peace of Ryswick<sup>2</sup> and the battle of Höchstädt;<sup>3</sup> and he lost no opportunity of contrasting the glory of the Protestant monarch, then in the height of his success, with the feebleness of the king of France, upon whom the Nemesis of his fate was now descending. He does not hesitate in the heartiness with which he has adopted his new country, in the exultation with which he sees the discomfiting of France. He cries to God for vengeance upon the persecutors.

<sup>1</sup> Born in 1657. His grandfather had been physician to Henri IV.

<sup>2</sup> Oct. 30th, 1697.

<sup>3</sup> Aug. 13th, 1704.



"The Daniels in the den, the Jonases in the whale's belly, have long cried unto God ; the faithful, menaced by the plots of Haman, have been cast down for many years ; why should not our great victory be a commencement of the favourable answer vouchsafed to us by God ? Yea, God has already heard us from the palace of his sanctuary."

De Superville was a Cartesian by training, and his sermons of doctrine and commentary are conceived in a strictly philosophical vein ; a fact which has earned for them much consideration amongst the most learned critics and theologians.

The most eloquent of all the Protestant pulpit-orators, as some maintain, the renowned preacher among the exiles, was Jacques Saurin.<sup>1</sup> His life extends far into the eighteenth century, but the fame of his preaching was at its height before the death of Louis XIV., during the last and most disastrous of that monarch's wanton struggles against the liberty and independence of his neighbours. The son of an advocate of Nîmes, born eight years before the revocation, he was expatriated with his family, and lived in Geneva, where he received a liberal education. At the age of fifteen he entered the army, and a year later obtained a commission in a regiment raised for the service of the Duke of Savoy, by M. de Ruvigny, afterwards earl of Galway. Before long, however, the duke withdrew from the league which had been formed against Louis XIV. ; and Saurin returned to Geneva, where he began to study theology. He secured an early reputation for oratory, and shortly after he had been consecrated to the ministry he was invited to, and accepted the charge of, the French Protestant Church in London, being then in his twenty-fourth year. Abbadie heard him preach in the English metropolis, and was so struck by his manner that he exclaimed : "Is it a man or an angel ?" London, however, did not keep

<sup>1</sup> 1677-1730.

him long ; and indeed the climate on this side of the Channel deterred many of the French exiles from settling in a land otherwise so hospitable and tolerant. He had paid a visit to the Hague, on account of his health, and his sermons there gave so much satisfaction that the Dutch insisted on retaining his services, and created for him a special and quaintly-named post as minister to the nobility.<sup>1</sup> He continued to live in Holland for the remainder of his life ; and five volumes of his sermons attest the high quality, the variety, and the practicalness of his style. These are amongst his subjects : *Divine Depths, Alms, The Sufficiency of Revelation, Fitful Devotions, The Torments of Hell, The Misfortunes of Europe, The Cost of the Soul, The Harmony of Religion and Politics, How to study Religion, Love of Country, Holiness, Conversation.* His eloquence was calm, solid, perhaps heavy,—but it was powerful and impressive. If he was rarely a great writer, he was always a great preacher ; if he had not the polish of Bossuet, the sparkling brilliancy of Bourdaloue, the elegance of the orators accustomed to preach before the court in Paris, he had the trenchant vigour most suitable to Protestant homiletics, the pointed vehemence necessary to find its way to the hearts of the downcast exiles who were his usual audience. Hear him on the subject of alms-giving :

“Let each one tax himself. Let none continue in arrears. Let a noble emulation be seen in our midst. Let the great give out of the products of their business, the soldier out of his pay, the merchant out of the fruit of his commerce, the working-man out of the labour of his hands ; let the pastor consecrate a portion of that which his meditations and studies obtain for him ; let the young man give of his pleasures ; let the worldly woman give of her ornaments ; let the sinful woman give of the perfumes destined to profane uses ; let the inhabitant of these Provinces give of his patrimony ; let the refugee give, let him gather up the

<sup>1</sup> “Ministre des Nobles,” a rather odd title in a republic.

fragments of his shattered vessel, and light therewith a fire to pay sacrifice to the God who has saved him from shipwreck. I know not what instinct assures me that this discourse will have more success than those heretofore delivered. Ask boldly, ye who distribute our charities ; come into our houses which the Eternal has blessed, and gather alms from a people who will contribute with joy,—who will even give with gratitude.”

In Prussia the princess Sophia Charlotte, the mother of Frederick William, the first king of Prussia, showed special favour to the French refugees, being ably seconded by the scholarly diplomatist Spanheim. The House of Brandenburg, which counted such scholars as Leibnitz among its friends and counsellors, emulated Louis XIV. in the eagerness and generosity with which it assembled the most celebrated men of the day, whether Prussians or foreigners, and extended its protection over the cultivators of science and literature.<sup>1</sup> At Berlin it established a French College, at Halle a French Institute, which subsequently ripened into a famous University. At Berlin, too, was founded under royal auspices a French printing-press and library, to which the refugees had free access at all times. Every week Spanheim received some literary friends at his own house, where Abbadie, Lenfant, Beausobre, Chauvin, David Ancillon, and others, were regular attendants. At the residence of Sophia Charlotte, at the castle of Lutzenburg, the exiles were yet more welcome. Jacques Abbadie, invited to Berlin at an early age, was ordained there in 1680, and became minister of the French Protestant Church ; the special friendship of the

<sup>1</sup> At Berlin the Court protected other people besides scholars, and there appears to have been very little exclusiveness in the hospitality afforded to the Protestant exiles in Prussia. Charles Ancillon, the son of David, in his *History of the Establishment of the French Refugees in Brandenburg*, says : “ A considerable advance has been made to a refugee, on condition that he should support four shops always well provided with *volaille de gibier frais, cuits et rôtis*.”

princess was not the only reward of his ability and eloquence. His *Treatise on the Truth of the Christian Religion* extorted even extravagant praise from Roman Catholics. Bussy-Rabutin writes to Madame de Sévigné: "We are now reading it, and we find that there is but this book to read in the world." The hyperbole pleased his correspondent, who rejoined: "It is the most divine of all books; this is the general opinion. I do not believe religion has ever been spoken of as by this man." The enthusiasm was perhaps overdone; but it shows, at all events, that the book was one which suited the times. Bussy-Rabutin says again: "It would not make me quit the world, as it has made Charmel; but it will make me thoroughly despise it." And Madame de Sévigné undertakes to read it once in every three months of her life. This much-lauded work, which, though ingenious and persuasive in its style, is really not the marvel of argument that one might suppose from such overdrawn estimates, was succeeded in a few years by a *Treatise on the Divinity of Jesus Christ*, virtually a continuation of the first. Abbadie's *Art of self-knowledge*, written after its author had come to England in the train of Marshal Schomberg, where he became minister of the Savoy Church, and where he died, is an essay on metaphysics, displaying, it seems to us, more power than the works which had preceded it; though all these productions were on the level of the seventeenth century, and will be read in the nineteenth only to satisfy a literary or a historical curiosity. Much the same thing may be said, in a different degree, of the remains of Lenfant,<sup>1</sup> and Beausobre<sup>2</sup>; who, however, were more distinctly historians than theologians and metaphysicians. The one has left a monument of his laborious enterprise in a *History of the Council of Basle, and of the Council of Constance*; the other in his *History of the Manicheans*; whereof the latter especially

<sup>1</sup> 1661-1728.<sup>2</sup> 1659-1738.



is yet read with satisfaction, and has not been displaced in our libraries by any better or more philosophic treatment of the same phase of ecclesiastical history.

#### § 4. FETTERING OF THE PRESS.

The system of government adopted by Louis XIV. and his counsellors, in so far as a preconcerted and definite system may be said to have existed, was one which undoubtedly entailed great evils upon the nation, and ultimately resulted in the temporary ruin of France ; but at the same time it was in many respects successful ; it served the purpose of exhibiting to Europe a splendid example of national glory, intellectual supremacy, external order, the highest triumphs of civilisation, all harmoniously existing side by side ; it evolved partial prosperity and contentment, at all events for a period, out of an extremity of popular poverty and wretchedness ; and if, in the end, it once more reduced the country to the same, or even to worse poverty and wretchedness, it may be maintained that the decline of France at the close of the seventeenth century was due in some measure to causes beyond the control of monarchs and statesmen, which the folly and crimes of these latter might seriously aggravate, but for which they cannot be held altogether responsible. Another king than Louis might have left the country in a far better condition ; a less selfish and obstinate ruler might have taxed his subjects less, and have done more to alleviate their sufferings, just as a weaker ruler might have had less influence for evil over the fortunes of the nation. No doubt many of the disasters of France must be attributed to the strong effect produced by the worst personal characteristics of the *Grand Monarque* upon his people ; but on the other hand the be of

Louis had a distinctly beneficial influence, and did for his country what few other absolute monarchs have ever done for theirs. Louis XIV. has often been arraigned at the bar of posterity, and the verdict of history upon his reign and acts will never be other than unfavourable ; but the literary historian, at any rate, can afford to do him justice. His faults are too many to suffer his virtues to be forgotten. The great mistake of his foreign policy was to suppose that he alone could stem the tide of religious independence in Europe, in face of the determined opposition offered to his assumptions by Prussia, Switzerland, Savoy, the German States, the Low Countries, and England ; but it was a fault based upon a clear and intelligible idea, which he doubtless entertained in all sincerity, and with a belief in the righteousness of his cause. The great fault of his home policy was to suppose that he could crush heresy, free thought, revolt of ideas and action, without a fatal suppression of natural forces which must eventually break forth and overwhelm either himself or his successors. He did in fact stifle all divergence of opinion in France, or at all events the free expression thereof ;—with what consequences the remainder of our literary survey must show.

The method and manner of this suppression are amongst the most interesting topics of the political history of the epoch ; let us arrest ourselves for a moment in order to inquire in what way the literature of the same epoch resisted and rebelled against the effort to thwart its wider development. Let us, in other words, appreciate the extent to which the bolder spirits of the declining age of Louis XIV. contrived to make themselves heard and felt amongst their contemporaries, resorting either to anonymity, to a clandestine press, or to the hazardous devices of pamphleteering. Anonymity was, of course, far less of an exception in France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than it has since become ; but it

was, after all, not very serviceable to those who wished to make their writings public in the face of an active censorship, strong penal laws, and a police so effective and industrious as that of Louis XIV. In order that a book or pamphlet might be published, the permission of the chancellor had first to be obtained; and those who wrote, printed, published, or distributed any work attacking religion or the government were put to death. Amongst the duties of the lieutenant-general of police, setting aside the maintenance of public order in the streets, none was more important, or required greater tact in its exercise, than the repression of pamphlets and publications of any kind which might be obnoxious to the Court, the authorities, the Church, or the University. When La Reynie was appointed to that office, in 1667, he found that his responsibility exacted all the vigilance and delicacy of which he was capable. The Fronde had been suppressed, and with it had for a time disappeared the inundation of aggressive tracts and brochures which it had called forth; but the same spirit which created the Fronde was still active in France—was indeed destined to remain in activity for many generations to come, and laws of greater or less severity were continually being passed in restriction of the freedom of the press. At the same time that Milton was making his noble protest in behalf of an unfettered utterance of opinion, France was—partly, no doubt, from the absolute necessity of her situation—strenuously multiplying her provisions against it. In 1666 a decree was passed, evidently in accumulation of the previously existing enactments, and with a view to additional stringency, authorising “the ordinary officers to judge without appeal all those who wrote newsletters or newspapers.” In June 1667 we find La Reynie writing to the chancellor: “I have drawn up the project of a decree of council in the matter of printing and bookselling, which I thought necessary to propose to you for the reasons set



down in the margin. I will send the same to M. Colbert, so that, if he has any special notion, I may report to you thereon." The same letter records that the lieutenant-general had just seized a tract of eight pages, printed at Brussels.<sup>1</sup> That decree was passed for a year only, and perhaps as an experiment; in 1670 La Reynie urged Colbert to re-enact it, and to give instructions to the procureur-général Talon "to repress by the most rigorous means the licence whereby libels were spread over the country, and in foreign lands;" and indeed Colbert had always acted with as much severity as lay in his power, against not only the printers and publishers, but also the mere writers of libels and satires, even when not intended for publication. Of course he had no lack of private informations against such writers, supplied from motives as various as those which usually inspire the conduct of informers. In 1683 Louis authorised La Reynie to proceed against "several ecclesiastics and booksellers who were concerned in the composition of various defamatory writings and libels, containing maxims contrary to the well-being of the administration, and the quiet of the King's subjects, and attacking the honour of divers persons occupying positions of dignity." Two of the persons here referred to, one of them being almoner of the Hôtel-Dieu, were condemned to the galleys. Another of the accused was Lenoble, author of the *Labours of Hercules*; of whose punishment, if any, the records do not speak. In 1686 a new edict was published whereby the number of booksellers was limited to twenty-four, and seventy-nine royal *censeurs* were appointed; of whom ten were for theology, eleven for jurisprudence, twelve for medical and physical sciences, eight for mathematics, thirty-six for history and literature, and two for the fine arts. But as the censors did not prevent the spread of obnoxious books, worse penalties were inflicted under the rule of La Reynie. In

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Clément, *La Police sous Louis XIV.*, p. 72 et seq.



1694 appeared a pamphlet, *The Apparition of Scarron to Madame de Maintenon, and the Reproaches which he cast upon her concerning her amours*. At the end of the same year a certain Chavance was tortured on the rack by the lieutenant-general, and, after accusing some monks of instigating his work, was condemned to be hanged. A printer and a book-binder were also put to the ordinary and extraordinary torture, and hanged, for having printed, bound, and sold libels against the king, amongst others the *Apparition*. Two accused were sent to the galleys. A fifth, after having been tortured, was going to be hanged, when his execution was put off, because he was said to be a distant relative of the king's confessor La Chaise. All these severities, however, did not prevent the appearance of pamphlets from time to time, more or less grievously offending the monarch and his court; some of which were printed secretly in France, under various devices, for the purpose of concealment and avoidance of punishments and penalties, whilst others were printed in foreign countries, in Holland especially, and privately introduced into France.<sup>1</sup> From 1660 to 1750, eight hundred and sixty-nine authors, printers, booksellers, vendors of engravings and prints, were thrown into the Bastille, as having published works contrary to morals, religion, or the king. They generally belonged to the latter category. But all this was bootless. In vain the police became more lynx-eyed; in vain the number of

<sup>1</sup> We give the titles of a few of these pamphlets: *Le Nouveau Turc des chrétiens*; *L'Alcoran de Louis XIV.*; *Les Soupirs de la France esclave*; *Les Héros de la France sortant de la barque à Caron à l'Esprit de Luxembourg*; *Luxembourg apparu à Louis XIV.*; *La Confession réciproque, dialogue entre Louis XIV. et le P. de la Chaise*; *Pensées Morales de Louis XIV.*; *Le Marquis de Louvois sur la selle*; *Julien l'apostat*; *l'Art d'assassiner les Rois enseigné par les Jésuites*; *Le partage du Lion de la fable, vérifié par le roi*; and *Moyen de réduire la France à un état plus chrétien*. With the exception of the first pamphlet, which appeared in 1683, all were published between 1689 and 1700. The *Caractères* and *Nouveaux caractères de la famille royale*, brought out in 1702 and 1703, and the *Entretien entre Louis XIV. et le Marquis de Maintenon*, published in 1710, are more bitter and scurrilous than the en

informers increased, death-warrants and condemnations to the galleys multiplied. Louis would not learn the lesson that it is impossible to gag the irrepressible ; and his successors paid dearly for the experience that the feelings of a nation will vent themselves in writing or in action, and that the latter is perhaps the more dangerous.

END OF VOL. II.

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